

HUMOR IN CHILDREN'S LITERATURE

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ABSTRACT

The study of humor in children's literature begins with an investigation of humor itself, its origins and manifestations, and those precepts that have survived from medieval to modern times. The exploration includes the view of humor as it relates to the universe, conceptualized by philosophers, as it relates to man as interpreted by psychologists, as it relates to the individual in the group setting studied by social-psychologists, and as it relates to the institutions of society considered by sociologists. The common and enduring factors of these multi-disciplines are traced through literature from the medieval through the twentieth century clarifying the world views of each given era. Finally, the emerging doctrines are applied to children and their reactions to funny books.

The writer proposes that social, affective, developmental, and cognitive elements all contribute to the child's understanding of humor in general and literary humor in particular. Verbal humor precedes literary humor and is dependent upon certain pre-existing conditions: knowing the 'rules' of the commonplace, which in turn permits the recognition of the incongruous, the basic humor experience, and understanding the 'frame,' the accepted humorous conventions known to others. Once the child can comprehend and create verbal humor, the appreciation of literary humor follows.

Literary humor depends upon incongruous characterizations, situations, or discourse. Archetypes of adult and children's classical humorous literature are examined to illustrate the commonality of their themes. These views are augmented in two

empirical studies of the responses of eight and nine year old British and American children to humorous books identified as primarily humor of character, situation, or discourse. Findings amplify the views concerning these major sources of humor in children's literature and indicate how writers exploit the psychological and sociological pressures that influence the child's reactions.

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I. INTRODUCTION

Humor in children's literature - how did I involve myself in this topic? As a reading specialist and language arts coordinator, I spent twelve years watching children read and helping them select books. The one outstanding feature that has remained in my memory is that no matter how difficult it was for a child to read, to decode the language, he would always manage to struggle through a funny book. What is there about funny books that appeals? A child, like an adult, seeks ways to make the intolerable tolerable so he turns to funny books to make him laugh. Topics that disturb or even create fear are made less serious when they are shown in a humorous light. The worries of everyday life are reduced to the commonplace when a perceptive writer places them in a comic setting. How does the writer learn how to do this and how does the reader come to share an awareness of the comic? In undertaking the study of humor in children's literature I hope to discover an answer to these questions.

The first section of the thesis explores humor as studied by philosophers, sociologists, social-psychologists, and psychologists. These disciplines uncover certain common themes: the incongruous, as set forth by Aristotle, as the origin of the humorous experience, and the view of humor as a social manifestation. As we shall see, although each researcher may emphasize a different aspect of the mismatch, the exaggeration, as such, is specified. The view of humor as social commentary is

common to humor theorists whether philosophical, sociological, or psychological in content.

For the child, humor is socially learned through exposure to adults and peers and their reactions to humorous offerings. Through this social exposure, the child functions psychologically by building a system of experience which includes a structuring of the past and an anticipation of the future. This anticipation is molded by the knowledge of the commonplace and the 'frame' of the humorous joke or story. These social-psychological experiences are described by competing schools of psychology. For my purposes, it is sufficient to recognize that the group as an influencing factor unites these divergent schools.

The development of play, as described by Piaget and detailed in the psychological chapter, relates the child's development of play to his ability to logically think. Play, as the place where joking and story-telling is developed, involves the concept of understanding the difference between reality and fantasy, a knowledge that precedes the appreciation of the incongruous. The child's sense of the comic begins to develop with the recognition of the incongruous. I propose that the area of fantasy, both in joke-telling and story-reading, is a play place in which the child's sense of the comic develops. All of the child's stored experiences based on his knowledge of the commonsense and the socially accepted are gradually assimilated and accommodated and reflected in the appreciation of literary humor. This area of play, like Winnicott's 'third area', is the child's private place in which he shares the

world of the comic with the writer.

The fifth chapter proposes that, as the child learns his language, he learns the rules of his culture and the humorous 'frame' as well. Investigations of language as social interaction are set forth as most researchers now agree that language is socially learned. I shall submit and support that before the child can appreciate literary humor he must have acquired a metalinguistic awareness, an understanding of the language of language, which is a necessary element in the development of verbal humor and the appreciation of all forms of verbal play. I shall examine early kinds of verbal play and suggest when metalinguistic awareness transfers itself into the knowledge of the structure and language of the riddle and joke.

The clown as a comic figure in the literary tradition has links with both children and adults. He is the bridge between the generations both in the oral and written traditions. As the comic figure of man, he embodies the cognitive, social, and affective areas of the humorous reaction. In my sixth chapter, I propose the clown as the origin of the comic character that extends from the Greek drama to modern literature both for children and adults. I interviewed and quote the views of a practicing clown and intersperse his comments with the history of the clown figure in European and American literature.

In the seventh chapter, I examine some of the great comic literary works of Europe and America to find the common characteristics that have aided their survival. I propose that the

reader must engage in certain interpretative procedures in order to appreciate the humor and that these procedures indicate a shared literary tradition between the reader and the writer. In addition to the technique of 'boundary breaking' between reality and fantasy, writers paint an incongruous picture of man and the society in which he lives that contains certain classic features. These features enable each succeeding generation to appreciate the literary humor even though they do not always 'get the joke.'

The eighth chapter illustrates how the classic traditions of adult literature extend to literature for children. Certain archetypes of children's classical humorous literature have been selected for an in-depth study to illustrate the commonality of their themes and frames.

My ninth chapter details an empirical study of eight and nine year old children in Great Britain and the United States and examines their reactions to humorous books identified as primarily humor of character, situation, or discourse. The findings are tabulated and related to my proposals about children's humor in general and children's literary humor in particular. Psychological and sociological interpretations of the literature are included pointing up how the writer exploits these connections. Conclusions about the child and the conditions leading to his appreciation of literary humor are made.

The writer of a funny book is similar to the ringmaster of a circus. All of the comic elements must be combined to create a compatible whole. Although each comic act in the circus is amusing

when viewed alone, it is in skillful combination with the other comic feats that the true humor and versatility of the show is achieved. In a similar way, each humorous character, situation, or bit of discourse is funny in itself, yet it is only when they are artfully blended by a clever author that a truly humorous narrative emerges. Whether the writer has created a massive comic work as Sterne and Dickens have done, or a simple narrative written especially for children, the orchestration of the comic parts makes the text succeed. I shall also compare this thesis to a circus with myself as ringmaster. My object is to take the speculations about humor that I examine and use them to support my thesis about humor in general and humor in children's literature in particular. I shall offer the view that, beginning with Aristotle, what philosophers, sociologists, psychologists, and linguists have to say about humor is applicable to the comic drama, the comic novel, and humorous books written especially for children. So, like P. T. Barnum, I hope that my enthusiasm for my proposals, and the investigation of the stages leading finally to the examination of children's funny books, will capture my audience.

II. PHILOSOPHIC SPECULATIONS ABOUT HUMOR

At the center of our study lies the human sense of humor; its birth, development, and nurture. In this section some assumptions about the nature of humor are presented. The terms comic, humorous, ludicrous, laughable, and witty are used interchangeably by humor theorists and will be used as descriptors of humor throughout this discourse. The classifications remain imperfect since many postulates fall into more than one category and often tend to overlap. Often explanations refer to laughter and its stimuli as well as to comedy and/or humor since researchers invariably refer to laughter in their discussions. Attempts to discriminate among the various terminologies seem to complicate rather than unravel their differences.

Why turn to philosophers for their views of humor at all? The fact is, philosophers have postulated about humor since Aristotle and virtually all writings concerned with humor refer to the philosophers and their works. The study of humorless explanations of humor can lead one to forget that humor is a pleasurable experience. I hope to keep my own sense of humor intact as I explore the views of those ancient and modern-day scholars.

Philosophers discuss humor in relation to their concepts of the nature of mankind. Their 'theories' exist only in connection with cosmology, a general way of looking at the world. Beginning with Aristotle, whose writings on the comic serve as a cornerstone for all who follow, we shall discover that incongruities have in some

way been basic to the humor theories of all philosophers.

A. Humor and the Incongruous

Humor arising from mismatched, disjointed pairings of ideas or situations that are divergent from customary patterns forms the basis of incongruity postulates. The notion of the incongruous as fundamental to the concept of humor has been suggested by scholars, beginning with Aristotle. From the medieval philosophers to psychologists, and sociologists, and in the world of drama and the arts, it has been relentlessly pursued, changing and adapting according to the world picture at the time of the writing, but never deviating from Aristotle's central idea of a disarrangement of an orderly idea. As we shall see, literature and the arts have been the vehicles exhibiting the humor of the times. Dramatists, poets, and novelists share the cosmology of the time and comment on the social manifestations that come from the world picture that people share (at a given time). Therefore, in literature there is commentary on what people take for granted, the norm, and the humor of deviance. Man learns the humor of his time through social exposure. Children, too, learn about humor through social interaction and its representations in art forms. In the pursuit of the basis for humor in children's books, the path has led directly to incongruity as the major source of the comic. In order to understand why this is the case, it becomes necessary to look back at the writings of those whose works have endured.

It is virtually impossible to trace incongruity speculations

without finding repeated references to Aristototele and his views of comedy as the 'Ridiculous'. We shall begin here and trace the theme of incongruity expounded by philosophers and illustrated by dramatists and poets to derive an understanding of this philosophical conjecture.

While incongruity is not always the dominant theme in the philosophical theories, I shall explore it as an integral part of each. Therefore it becomes necessary to clarify each doctrine of humor fully in order to see where the concept of the incongruous fits in.

1. Aristotle and the Golden Mean

Aristotle's writings have been used as a kind of handbook for thinkers from ancient times to the present day. As Russell (1946) comments:

He came at the end of the creative period in Greek thought, and after his death it was two thousand years before the world produced any philosopher who could be regarded as approximately his equal. (p. 173)

Aristotle, as a philosopher, is in many ways very different from all his predecessors. He is the first to write like a professor: his treatises are systematic, his discussions are divided into heads, he is a professional teacher, not an inspired prophet. (p.174)

For Aristotle, incongruity lay in the ridiculous as seen as errors or deformities. The use of the mask or padded bodies distorted the natural human figure and so created an incongruous sight. The

physical exaggeration of the body combined with verbal obscenity to present in Greek comedy an early picture of the humor of the incongruous.

Treatises on the origins of laughter, humor, and the comic begin with Aristotle in his Poetics. It is remarkable that a section as brief as his discussion of comedy should have been, and continues to be, the basis of researchers' ideas concerning humor.

As for Comedy, it is (as has been observed) an imitation of men worse than the average; worse, however, not as regards any and every sort of fault, but only as regards one particular kind, the Ridiculous, which is a species of the Ugly. The Ridiculous may be defined as a mistake or deformity not productive of pain or harm to others; the mask, for instance that excites laughter, is something ugly and distorted without causing pain. (In Kaplan, 1958)

The Poetics is based on Aristotle's observation of the dramatic practice of his time and partly intended as a guide for aspiring writers (Potts, 1949) It is Aristophanes, with his broad verbal humor interspersed with obscenities and comic imitation that best exemplifies Greek comedy.

All of the works of Aristotle, and Galen, and other great thinkers could be interpreted into a connected system encompassing physiology, psychology, alchemy, astrology, and other fields of contemporary interest. This integration of the sciences reflected the balanced cosmology of the Ptolemaic universe and lasted until the Copernian revolution.

Aristotle's 'Golden Mean', described in his Nicomachean Ethics,

cites moderation as the chief guide for organizing a virtuous life. True virtue follows a middle path between extremes of excess or deficiency. The medieval cosmology, derived from Aristotle, links all creatures to each other and distinguishes all creatures from one another. In the lowest order of creation are plants which are capable of nutrition and growth. They are followed by animals which are capable of 'sensitive' life; perception, reaction, and desire, and the movement to fulfill these desires. On the highest natural level is man who has intellect and is not driven merely by appetite but seeks knowledge and virtue as goals in themselves. Whenever the 'Great Chain of Being' is disrupted, either by man aspiring to the intelligence of angels or the power of the Divine, or by his sinking to the level of the beasts, by drunkenness or madness, then incongruity results. Man behaving unreasonably is a tragic figure if the destiny of nations or other people is involved. He is a comic figure if his unreasonable behavior is seen in a social context. (Lovejoy, 1966, Landon-Davies, 1930).

2. The Medieval Humors

The cosmic order of the Greeks and the 'Great Chain of Being' were the basis of the doctrine of the humors. The body has four humors and each of these humors is associated with a certain planet, constellation of the zodiac, hour, day, season, color, metal, disease, time of life, profession, and vocation. A happy balance of humors created the Aristotelian 'Golden Mean'. If these humors were not in proper proportion and any one in excess, health, temperament,

and character were affected. The four humors were blood, which was thought to correspond with a sanguine or passionate temperament; phlegm, a phlegmatic or calm nature; yellow bile, choleric or bad-tempered; and black bile, melancholic. The term humor gradually came to refer to any manner of oddity of dress or manner, or to any amusing eccentricity or dominant trait. Since exaggeration is a comic element, characters portrayed with an excess of one or another humor appeared comical. Subsequently, the word humor itself came to mean comic.

The Elizabethan carried over the medical and astrological concepts into literature as evidenced by the references to the 'humors' by Shakespeare, and Ben Jonson, and other dramatists before and after them. Incongruity took the form of an imbalance of the body humors and subsequently as excess in temperament. These excesses became exaggerated in comedy. According to Elizabethan writers, human life fell into three main divisions: childhood (phlegmatic humor), middle-age (sanguine and choleric humors), and senility (melancholic humor). The fool in Shakespeare, often referred to as a 'boy', falls into the childhood division and hence is phlegmatic. Since an excess of phlegm was also thought to produce physical extremes, Shakespeare created fat cowardly Sir Toby Belch (Twelfth Night), broomstick legs for skinny Sir Andrew (Twelfth Night), and a waddle for the rascal Falstaff (Henry IV). Shakespeare made countless allusions to the humors and to astrology but his characters are too finely woven and intricate to present a single humor as a basis for characterization. (Draper, 1945).

After the term humor passed from physicians and psychology into common speech, any mood or eccentricity was liable to be called a humor. In Every Man in His Humour (Jonson, 1598), each character is stereotyped by one of the four humors. This dominating characteristic supplies the humor in the play. In the introduction to Every Man Out of His Humour (1600) he writes:

In every human body
The choler, melancholy, phlegm, and
blood,
By reason that they flow continually
In some one part, and are not continent,
Receive the name of humours. Now thus
far
It may by metaphor, apply itself
Unto the general disposition:
As when some one peculiar quality
Doth so possess a man that it doth draw
All his affects, his spirits and his
powers,
In their confluents, all to run one
way,
This may be truly said to be a humour.

The comic characters of Jonson are in the grip of their excesses. Some characters have permanent loss of balance and are incorrigible. Others have a temporary imbalance as a result of association, sympathy, or habit and may be cured. Jonson experimented in the comedy of humors and reached his peak in Volpone (1606) where power through wealth is the excessive characteristic. (Palmer, 1934).

We can relate the humors to a contemporary body of jokes, cartoons, and stories called 'black humor.' Black humorists make public what is ordinarily private through comic attack. The absurdities and contradictions of everyday life which cause common

anxiety and collective outrage are lampooned in both the oral and written genres. The term 'black' connotes a dark and dismal humor, what proponents of the medieval humors would call a 'melancholy' humor. Burton, in his Anatomy of Melancholy (1881), examines in detail the comic side of melancholy. He notes that he will attempt to reveal 'why melancholy men are witty, which Aristotle hath long since maintained in his problems'. He writes:

Melancholy men have the most excellent wits but not all, this humour may be hot or cold, thick or thin; if too hot, they are furious and mad: if too cold, dull, stupid, timorous, and sad: if temperate, excellent, rather inclining to that extreme of heat, then cold.

What we derive from Burton's statement is a picture of a melancholy man, one in excess of black bile, who can be witty if there is a balance of temperatures in the body. Modern man becomes melancholy or 'black' in his humor when he reveals himself absurdly exposed to an uncontrollable sinister world against which he is fruitlessly pitted. Normal events are depicted as being capable of becoming unexpectedly abnormal and implying indefensible dangers. The fine line between laughter and tears comes into focus in black humor where tears are very close to a joking surface. A modern joke illustrates this kind of dichotomy.

A blind man with a seeing-eye dog walked into a shop. Suddenly he seized the dog by the tail and began to swing him around in the air. "Sir, what are you doing!" cried the clerk. "Why I'm just looking around," said the blind man.
(Anonymous)

Delving too deeply into the joke causes an immediate mixed

reaction. There is sympathy for the man and his struggle in a world designed for those who can see, there is horror at the vision of the dog being twirled around in the air, and there is humor as well at the notion of a blind man 'looking around'. There is more likely to be a mixture of humor and revulsion, the typical response to black humor, as the listener calls forth both a visual image and an appreciation of the language play. This idea of an excess, a lack of balance in human characteristics, is exemplified in drama and literature. Exaggeration of appearance, actions, or language is typical of characters in humorous literature for adults and children. My study of children's books will show the continuation in modified form of the ideas put forth by the comedy of humors.

3. Kant

Celebrated among the incongruity theorists is the German philosopher Immanuel Kant (1724-1804). Kant is known as the founder of German idealism which put emphasis on mind rather than matter and eventually led to the conclusion that only the mind exists. Kant's reference to laughter appears in a few pages of a 'Remark' in Critique of Judgement (1790) which contains his aesthetic philosophy. Suggesting that reason is threatened by feeling, Kant states that:

We must distinguish between
gratification which is the bodily
feeling of well-being, and
satisfaction which belongs to reason
and is equivalent to approbation.

Producing a formula for laughter that has enlightened many

proponents of the incongruity explanation of humor, Kant relates wit to attitudes of mind and body.

All changing free play of sensation
(that have no design at their basis)
gratifies because it promotes the
feeling of health.

Wit is the 'free play of sensation' and although its animation is excited by ideas of the mind, it is a bodily reaction.

Laughter is an affection arising from
the sudden transformation of a strained
expectation into nothing.

In other words, both the body and the mind have been prepared for certain definitive movements and thoughts that are transformed by some kind of incongruity. Perhaps this can best be explained by the concept of a meeting with a great hero and one in whom we place feelings and thoughts of awe and reverence. Upon meeting our hero, we are faced with a rude, crude individual. The absurd incongruity that replaces our preconceived expectations changes our bodily pose of deference and humility to the abrupt dissolution of the attitude with laughter and its physical signs. Changed attitudes of the mind would parallel this changed attitude of the body. This is an early conception that a knowledge of the ordinary must be held before an incongruity can be realized.

4. Schopenhauer

Schopenhauer (1788-1860), who developed Kant's ideas further, viewed humor as an overthrow of logical expectations and paradox as the source of the ludicrous.

The cause of laughter in every case is

simply the sudden perception of the incongruity between a concept and the real objects which have been thought through it in some relation, and the laugh itself is just the expression of this incongruity.

Paradox is the source of the ludicrous, and the cause of laughter is the perception of the incongruity between a concept and a real object.

In everything that excites laughter it must always be possible to show a conception and a particular, that is a thing or event, which certainly can be subsumed under the conception, and therefore thought through it, yet in another and more predominating aspect does not belong to it at all, but is strikingly different from everything else that is thought through that conception.

Schopenhauer divides the examples of his speculations into two main groups. The first group, witticisms, begin with the object (the percept) and pass from it to the concept. One example is the story of the king who laughed at a peasant wearing light clothing in midwinter.

'If Your Majesty had put on what I have
you would find it very warm'.
'What is that'?
'My whole wardrobe'!

Under this concept we think of both the unlimited wardrobe of the king and the sole garment of the peasant. The second group is the absurd which progresses from concept to percept. As an example, there are soldiers guarding a prisoner who passed the time by playing cards with him. When they discovered him cheating they put him out of the guardhouse. We begin with the concept, 'Cheats should be turned out' and subsume it under the circumstance where

dismissal is not a punishment, since the prisoner was to be guarded. Actually what Schopenhauer is saying in the first group of witticisms is that someone or something is being ridiculed because of an inadequacy when related to a general concept. In the second group, the concept is ridiculed when the attempt to apply it to a particular item reveals its inadequacy. Perhaps Schopenhauer is espousing that the crux of the joke is in its twisted meaning. (Monro 1951)

While I agree that incongruity is basic to humor and shall enlarge on this issue as I proceed in my writing, the omission of certain elements in these postulates leaves an important part of humor unexplained: the code of values supplied by past experience and the influence of the emotions. Proponents of incongruity advance the intellectual rather than the emotional attitudes. All of these elements combined comprise the forces that influence a humorous response. Incongruity is applicable to people, events, and discourse. None of these elements alone can create humor without an understanding of the ordinary. To perceive the incongruous, the mismatch, the events of the commonplace must be internalized. This premise extends to children as well as adults as we shall see in subsequent chapters.

B. Humor as Superiority

Writers describing humor assume that their readers are rational men and women who agree with the writer on points of social and philosophical origin and share the same values. They may share the

dominant ideology, or a criticism of it. Ben Jonson, in Everyman in His Humour, does both. As we shall see, Hobbes is asking his readers to join the ranks of the critics, the superiors.

1. Hobbes

Laughter as triumph over other people or events is the basis for superiority doctrines of humor dating back to the 17th century British philosopher, Thomas Hobbes. Hobbes said that 'laughter is nothing else but sudden glory arising from a sudden conception of some eminency in ourselves, by comparison with the infirmity of others, or with our own formerly.' And since:

....men take heinously to be laughed at
or derided that is triumphed over,
laughter without offence must be at
absurdities and infirmities abstracted
from persons, and when all the company
may laugh together; for laughing to
one's self putteth all the rest into
jealousy and examination of
themselves. (In Greig, 1923)

Mockery, ridicule and laughter at the actions of others are central features of the experience of humor as feeling superior to other people. The infirmities of those less fortunate than ourselves seem to us, the onlookers, who are always identified with the reasonable man, exemplifying the Golden Mean, as I have already described it, where the defect, because it is comic, is neither painful nor destructive. Hobbes's description of the humor of superiority is the implicit message that these defects are found in people. Hobbes carefully warns his reader to do his laughing in the abstract so as not to offend his companions, but the fact remains

his references to the origin of humor apply to people and the difficult notion that humor is judgemental. Humor of superiority lends itself to political and social criticism which appears as satire and ridicule.

Satire is in itself a form of literature that aims to ridicule someone or something. The target maybe an entire philosophical system (Voltaire's Candide), a social evil, or an individual person. The laughter aroused by the presentation suggests a feeling of superiority in the reader or listener. There is no more devastating social or political mimetic fantasy than Swift's Gulliver's Travels. If we are to accept Hobbes' view then the implicit understanding is that all humor can be seen as satiric and I find that unacceptable.

The whole area of ethnic humor is illustrative of superiority. Typical are national, racial, religious, and class slurs that often take the form of riddles and jokes and are the private stock of children's lore.

Why did the Polack run his car off the cliff?
Because he wanted to try out his new air brakes

On the news yesterday it said there were 30 colored people swimming in the English Channel, and they were mistaken for an oil slick (McCosh 1979, p.252)

This is an important part of children's joking and will be treated more fully in a later section.

The problem with superiority explanations of humor derived from Hobbes is not so much in what they explain, but in what they do not explain. We can apply superiority to humor about people and

situations, but when we attempt to apply superiority to linguistic humor we find inadequacies. Word-play, which involves playing with sounds and meaning, and produces pleasure in the manipulation of words for its own sake cannot be explained by Hobbes' proposals. The pure irrational pleasure that arises from word associations, rhythms, and sheer nonsense seems to escape his explanations.

Where, then, does the incongruous or the nonsensical fit into this picture? I have difficulty with the notion that the incongruous, when understood as the antithesis of the commonsense world, should be explained as a criticism of the ordinary, and therefore satiric. Rather I see it as a comic way of looking at life that consciously exaggerates its elements through absurdity.

C. Bergson and 'Mechanical Inelasticity'

The 'mechanization' of life is the heart of Bergson's theory in his essay 'Laughter' (1911). The comic spirit is a living thing existing only within the bounds of what is 'strictly human'. The comic is a puppet-like figure afflicted with absentmindedness and unthinking actions. Characterizing the comic as stiff and rigid, a kind of inanimate mechanism, Bergson is best understood in his own words:

A man, running along the street, stumbles and falls; the passers-by burst out laughing. They would not laugh at him, I imagine, could they suppose that the whim had suddenly seized him to sit down on the ground. They laugh because his sitting down is involuntary. Consequently, it is not his sudden change of attitude that raises a laugh, but rather the

involuntary element in this change, - his clumsiness in fact. Perhaps there was a stone on the road. He should have altered his pace or avoided the obstacle. Instead of that, through lack of elasticity, through absentmindedness and a kind of physical obstinacy, as a result, in fact, of rigidity or of momentum, the muscles continue to perform the same movement when the circumstances of the case called for something else. That is the reason of the man's fall, and also of the people's laughter.

This absentminded individual, according to Bergson, has kindled the imagination of comic authors. Don Quixote is the classical archetype while the mechanical, exaggerated antics of the circus clown mocks the essence of the rigidity of man. Bergson's presentation of the modern comic type is the professional who automatically acts according to his code of business, extending the theory of rigidity.

Bergson describes a comic physiognomy as a deformity that is directed toward the ridiculous. Thus he explains the comic element in caricature. The artist exaggerates the distortions of natural features and expressions, as a normally long nose that is comically lengthened. This creates a rigidity, or inelasticity, that provokes laughter. It is 'something mechanical encrusted upon the living'.

Bergson classifies comic situations as those which give the illusion of a mechanical arrangement, as the description of a child and his Jack-in-the-box. Theatrically, the Punch and Judy show whose policeman is repeatedly knocked down each time he springs upright expresses this mechanical action. This rigid, mechanical

condition is present in situations, both in life and in the theatre, and in comic action, comic language, and comic characters in the theater and in literature.

Bergson notes three comic situations. The first, 'repetition,' is applied to action and dialogue in the theatre. A mechanical action exists when a person appears and is repeatedly pushed out of sight only to reappear once again. Verbal 'repetition' is comic when repeated words are ignored by others and create a spring-like action as they reappear and are once again pushed aside. A second comic situation is 'inversion' in which fixed roles are exchanged or inverted, as the child teaching the parent or the prisoner lecturing the judge. The third comic situation involves 'reciprocal interference' which refers to a comic situation that simultaneously belongs to two independent series of events and can be interpreted as having two different meanings at the same time. This would be illustrated by a play within a play.

The comic element in words has several descriptors. 'Comic transformation' can be viewed in sentences and words. One category is the 'inversion' previously applied to comic situations.

What do you mean by emptying your pipe
on my terrace?
What do you mean by putting your
terrace under my pipe?

'Reciprocal interference', a second type of verbal comedy, is best illustrated by the play-on-words which offers two different sets of ideas in the same sentence.

Today a box of wigs fell off the back
of a lorry.
Police are combing the area.

Bergson refers to 'transformation' as the most encompassing method of comic language. This can involve the real and the ideal (irony), the dignified and the mean (degradation), or the large and the small (exaggeration). Ideas in their natural setting are transferred onto another level.

According to Bergson, comic characters are created by rigidity, automatism, absentmindedness, and unsociability. The laughter that results from these conditions is a humiliating social-corrective. Bergson has defined comedy in terms of the comedy of manners and attributed a social meaning to it.

One cannot help seeing Bergson's work as a reaction to the Industrial Revolution and the mechanization of society. The comic figure with his automated mannerisms and gestures is a puppet-like figure of man. Bergson relates his work to Molière, a master of the comedy of manners, whose characters embody excessive traits (The Imaginary Invalid, Tartuffe).

The incongruity in Bergson is the excessive rigidity of human characteristics, situations, and discourse. These elements are found in the comedies of Molière, Bergson's countryman whose sense of the comic derives from earlier human comedy and pervades the whole of French literature, where even virtue and wisdom in excess may be comic. Bergson appears to have united the superiority and incongruity tenets. Humor is derisive since it serves the social purpose of severely criticizing unsocial behavior. Furthermore, the mechanical being is incongruous to the natural fluidity of man. Bergson's formula sheds light on comic characters, situations, and

discourse.

I agree that humor consists of the connection of usually divergent ideas, but do not find it necessary to include derision as a part of that humor.

Social axioms dictate that laughter at physical deformity is taboo. Children, before they have internalized the rules of society, will laugh at the blind or the crippled, but adults know the rules and humor at the expense of the physically handicapped is avoided. Bergson would have us believe that physical deformity is funny if we can imitate it. Therefore it follows that a hunchback, who can be imitated, will arouse laughter. Bergson offers the view that we laugh at the 'rigidity' of the stoop of the hunchback. I cannot accept the notion that physical deformity, whether natural or imitated, is funny.

D. Humor as Vitality: Susanne Langer

Langer(1953), relating humor to comedy, finds its range extending from verbal wit to incongruent absurdities. Like the medieval philosophers, she uses comic drama to explore her ideas about the origin of humor and finds that 'laughter springs from its very structure.' Rejecting superiority as too narrow a source of laughter, Langer submits that what we laugh at does not explain the nature of laughter. She views laughter as the culmination of a 'surge of vital feeling,' which, when it reaches a recognizable climax, results in smiling or laughing. While accepting the laughter of superiority and the joy of entertaining activities as

parts of the reality of life, it is in comedy that Langer finds the source of true humor appreciation. The laughter is not at or with characters but at their situations, their actions and reactions. To find pleasure in feelings of superiority toward the characters would force us to dwell in their world rather than the world of the theatre sacrificing the 'psychical distance' for involvement in the play itself. Although laughter of superiority may result from incompetent acting, it is the clever dialogue or amusing situation that create the poetic elements of pure humor. Comedy enhances our vitality because it recreates in the abstract the motion and rhythm of life. At the crescendo of vitality laughter breaks out. We laugh at events or dialogue in the play when its high point is reached: 'vitality breaks into humor.' Good comedy, then, builds up to humor. Jokes for jokes' sake may make us laugh, but they do not constitute good comedy.

Langer also describes comedy as the universal contest between men and women. It progresses through comic rhythm and has grown through every culture from primitive miming, clowning, and occasional erotic dancing to the very distinctive dramatic art. There may be no humor to speak of in such classic heroic comedies, the fool being used only in a decorative way, as in tragedy. Humor, then, is only one of the natural elements of comedy. The laughter it elicits appears no different from laughter as a response to real people. Yet it is laughter of a different character. In the theatre, we are possessed by the play, the illusion of the drama. Humor breaks through when the action culminates in a witty remark or

situation. The vitality continues even after the laugh because the action continues and we are carried along with it. Laughter in daily life, at absurd actions or events, is a response to isolated stimuli and so are individual encounters that only seem funny if one's mood accepts them as funny. Humor in comedy is not a matter of one's mood since it belongs to the dramatic art and not to our actual surroundings. Real comedy, according to Langer, creates a sense of life, of rhythmic feeling, an abstract world of its own that lifts the audience into a state of exhilaration.

The techniques of comedy are often absurdities, stereotyped expressions of feeling, and heightened action. The feeling in comedy is 'man against the world,' the great challenger. But the battle is minor and he suffers neither permanent defeat nor permanent triumph. Man is neither a total villain nor a total hero. Therein lies the comedy. Issues are 'light,' dangers are not disastrous, for that would be tragedy. Like Ruth Nevo (1963), Langer believes the erotic to be the origin of comedy. From the prehistoric fertility rites to contemporary comedy, man has been fascinated by his very existence.

Using the comic drama as the focus of the analysis of humor was common to most of our philosophers, but it is Langer, as a contemporary philosopher of humor who specifically details what in the comedy creates the humor. She identifies comic language and comic situation as the true elements of humor, negating humor of character as too narrow a cause. While I agree with Langer's denial of superiority as the basis for humor, I do not see humor of

character as necessarily founded on feelings of superiority. As I will detail in a later chapter on children's literature, character humor is one of the three main categories of humor in children's books, along with humor of situation and humorous discourse. I will propose that humor of character is equally as important as the other two and is used as frequently by writers of funny books for children. As my empirical study will show, books whose humor depends upon humorous characterizations are favorites of children.

Although seemingly diverse, there are similarities among the aforementioned arguments. Aristotle's mime and mask are linked with Bergson's theory of rigidity. The comic as a result of an imbalance in the humors is an outgrowth of Aristotle's 'Golden Mean' as are Bergson's speculations identifying laughter as a social phenomenon meant to arrest 'the mechanical' and keep the individual aware of his environment. The derision in Hobbes' work appears in Bergson as a form of transposition: portraying something formerly dignified as mean. The incongruity tenets of Kant and Schopenhauer are linked with Aristotle, Hobbes, Bergson, and Langer, while not as the primary thrust of their arguments, but as supplementary features. The thread of incongruity is woven throughout the philosophical studies of humor. The elements of the extreme, excess or deficiency in Aristotle's 'Golden Mean,' can be found in the comedy of humors, arguments of superiority, incongruity, Bergson's 'mechanical inelasticity,' and Langer's 'vitality.'

Humor is seen throughout as a phenomenon or characteristic related to man as he appears in society, his social self in

interaction with other men and women. Laughter is a social response to another's deformity of body, actions, or speech. The laughter may be superior, as in Hobbes, or act as a deterrent to unsocial behavior, as in Bergson, or just as the response to the vital fact of being human, as in Langer.

Although all of the philosophical postulates are derived from the particular, they are related to people, events, social conditions, and represented for consideration by art forms. I have noted that the ideas of Aristotle, Kant, Schopenhauer, Hobbes, Bergson, and Langer can be applied to people and events, although Langer negates character as a source of pure humor. All depend on the world view at the time of the writing and the continuation of themes will depend upon the view of the world and man as it continues to change. All are learned through social exposure and the current conventions of art. Plays and stories continue in their generation to incorporate these perspectives as Greek drama did for Aristotle, Shakespeare and Jonson did for philosophers of their day, and Molière did for Bergson. The middle of the twentieth century does not yield much philosophizing about humor, apart from Susanne Langer. This is the result of the shift in emphasis from the universe to the individual and the rapid rise of psychology as the focal study of humanity. In my next section, I will continue my investigation and discover which themes continue to appear and examine them from a cultural and sociological viewpoint.

III. CULTURAL AND SOCIOLOGICAL STUDIES:

THE GROUP SETTING AND ITS EFFECT UPON THE INDIVIDUAL

In the preceding chapter outlining philosophical explanations of humor, I have isolated incongruity, first introduced by Aristotle and later emphasized by Kant and Schopenhauer, as the primary source of the humorous response. Although I do not believe that superiority, as described by Hobbes, is the primary basis for humor, it does exist as a motivation for some humor and I will return to it in this chapter both in racial and ethnic humor.

How, then, does the child learn what is incongruous? He learns the ordinary, and subsequently the extraordinary, through social exposure. A knowledge of society's 'rules' (the congruous) comes through exposure to the group setting both in the overall (society itself) and in a microcosm of that society in the familial or peer group setting. Both sociologists and social-psychologists have studied humor as it relates to the social setting. Like philosophers, their gravity often obscures the fact that all of this research has been derived from people, both adults and children, who listened to and recounted jokes and funny stories, making the research an amusing social event.

Social-psychologists are interested in man as a social animal and they study his reactions in specific social situations in order to achieve a general explanation of social interaction patterns and the dynamics of group structure. The study of the social functions of humor serves as an aid to the comprehensive understanding of the group structure and the group process. Little research has been

undertaken on the effects of the group upon the individual member's response to humor despite the fact that it is obviously an area worthy of study. This, in part, must be a result of the enormity of the topic and the inexactness of the investigations that have been carried out. Researchers who follow look at manifestations of the topic rather than attempting theoretical discussions, which might tend to become unwieldy and ambiguous.

Sociologists are concerned with institutions as well as the individual in a group. Their studies revolve around the social organizations in which people live. The problem of separating the social-psychological studies from the sociological studies arises when it becomes apparent that the researchers themselves make no such distinction. Their research appears in the same journals, usually psychologically oriented, as well as in texts which combine a multitude of disciplines. While social psychologists center their studies on group dynamics and sociologists' sphere of interest is social institutions, there is much overlapping of research. As I shall detail, the institutions that have been investigated have most often been studied in small group settings. This condition makes a significant contribution to the social-psychologists' argument that the group itself is an influential force in the appreciation of humor.

There is little anthropological cross-cultural research on humor. Those studies that exist focus on the content differences in humor appreciation rather than the humor process itself which is assumed to be constant across cultures. The assumption is that

familiarity with content is a variable involved in the appreciation of certain jokes: current political jokes in the United States will not be funny when presented to a Chinese group.

I propose that the group, familial, ethnic, professional, or other, has profound influence on the individual's appreciation of humor. I also suggest that, for the child, it is the peer group that has the greatest impact upon his reactions to situations understood as humorous. Humor generally arises from a particular situation and the group is responsive to it. Each group has its own system of beliefs and customs which are governed by its own set of 'rules'. Boundaries are set to determine what is acceptable behavior. Humor emerges when the 'rules' have been internalized and the ordinary boundaries are broken and reformed to encompass the incongruous. The interpretation of any experience as humorous depends on the recognition from some group or society that certain ideas and behaviors in certain contexts are both deviant and comic.

I have collected and will review, first, some research studying the effects of the group upon the individual's response to humor. After reviewing social-psychological, sociological, and anthropological studies involving adults, I will look at the current research involving children in the group setting.

A. Conformity

Early twentieth century studies of humor suggest the importance of group conformity. La Fave (1961) makes the following statement about group influence:

...few psychologists understand that the group member internalizes the group culture as his own. And once he has, he is an individual no more; he has been permanently and (short of brain damage) irretrievably socialized. He may pompously proclaim his free will. He may enhance his self-esteem by thinking he is 'doing his thing.' But the group's culture is pulling his strings....

La Fave comes to this conclusion in connection with his work concerning ethnic humor detailed later in this chapter. It is a concept that deeply effects all social studies of humor.

In an early study of humor, Alice Gregg (1928) pointed to social setting as a catalyst for humor. In an observational study of twenty-two three year olds for a period of forty hours during a three month period, her finding indicated that 93% of all laughs occurred when the children were in social groups.

Hayworth (1928) considered laughter a means of communication in a group setting but cites the group itself as a catalyst for laughter.

Dupreel (1930) viewed laughter as having developed in a social setting and being bound up with the life of the group.

Ruth Perl (1933) studied the influence of social factors on humor. Three lists of jokes were statistically rated according to funniness. Subjects were forty graduate students who were to grade the jokes on a three point scale. Three variations were presented to each student: one list was taken home for grading, one was read to the group while they graded them, and the third was a slide presentation to the group. Results indicated that jokes presented

to the group visually enjoyed a higher average rating than those judged privately. Jokes presented visually appeared more humorous than those presented orally. Jokes rated in private were the least funny. Social facilitation had more effect on poor jokes than on good ones.

Heim (1936) found the social element in humor (who around you is laughing) has more impact than the joke itself.

These early studies pointing to the group as the place where humor is born and nurtured are forerunners to a body of work concerning children and the group setting that did not appear for another fifty years. I shall come to it later in this chapter.

Hovering in these studies are the remains of the individualistic excess of the humors, the superiority of Hobbes, and the mechanism of Bergson. To be a member of a group is to have its social sense of humor. Nevertheless, Martineau (1972) wonders if there are any real sociological studies of humor.

Does a sociology of humor exist? If the existence of a substantial body of scientific literature is the criterion, the answer must be negative. At this time there are approximately a score of journal articles scattered over some thirty years, a few directly pertinent dissertations, and several books and monographs which refer to humor at some point but do not examine it in any comprehensive manner.

The picture ten years later has improved somewhat, and more research is being done, but researchers still tend to look at some segment of humor rather than creating a broad sociological theory.

B. Special Societies and their Humor: the Threatened; Ethnic Minorities

Obrdlik (1942), describing humor used towards those who constitute a threat to existence, wrote of his own experiences in Czechoslovakia during the Nazi occupation.

Do you know why daylight-saving time has been exceptionally prolonged this year? Because Hitler promised that before the summer is over, he and his army will be in England. (p.713).

Obrdlik cites the emergence of this type of humor as a reaction to dangerous and tragic events. The humor is an influencing factor in establishing the social characteristics of Czechs and Nazis as groups and the pattern of the relationship between them. The humor serves as a release and bolsters morale having a positive effect on the oppressed and a negative effect on the occupiers.

Racial humor is primarily created to attain superiority at the expense of another racial group, a Hobbesian derivation. The effect of the dominant culture group gives rise to ethnic humor which may be defined as any joke or funny story that makes reference to a particular subculture or a member of that subculture. Ethnic humor may perform as a social control function (Bergson) of helping to maintain the hierarchy both within and between groups or social classes. Ethnic humor may also be used against the dominant culture group to expose their weaknesses and reduce their prestige and power. This can be described as laughter in the face of threat and is a strengthening and encouraging factor for minority group members.

Often minority group members tell jokes on themselves rather than risk the telling of the joke by a dominant culture member. Dick Gregory, the Black American comedian, in his book, Nigger, defuses the power of the objectionable word by using it himself as the title of his autobiography. Most of the stand-up American Jewish comics follow the same pattern by telling Jewish jokes.

Myrdal (1944) analyzed humor in the context of race relations. He suggests that intergroup humor serves certain social functions: an escape for erratic behavior, solace for the sufferer, and the implicit understanding and approval of fellow group members. He explained the 'Negro problem' as basic to the heart of American life. The 'American Dilemma' is the ongoing conflict between the original values set out at the birth of the country and the emphasis placed on those values by individuals and groups in the culture.

Burma (1946) dealt with racial humor in a systematic way. He described it as a way of elevating one's self at the expense of others. Almost all racial humor:

definitely can be related to racial competition
and conflict and the social and cultural patterns
which have arisen from them.

What Burma is referring to is the suitability of humor for subtly conveying malice.

Klapp (1950) linked humor with social structure by showing that the fool has a specific place in the hierarchy. He characterizes all of the incompetencies, failures, and lost causes, and serves as

the scapegoat and butt of humor, encompassing both the incongruity and superiority theories of humor. By ridiculing his behavior, which violates propriety, group members reenforce what they know to be acceptable conduct: the rules. Klapp suggests that the fool has broad social implications as a means of enforcing conformity and eliminating deviant behavior. This linking of the fool with the social structure concurs with my own investigation of the clown that will be dealt with later in this study.

Blau (1955) and Bradney (1957) studied the social functions of humor in bureaucracies. Blau, in an analysis of joking in a state employment agency, found joking helped to unite the group and reduced tensions resulting from competition. Bradney, using sales assistants in a London department store, also found humor to control the conflict of competition.

Middleton and Moland (1959) investigated joking in Negro and white subcultures. Testing a number of hypotheses including frequency of joke-telling, differences between sex and racial groups, and frequency of telling sexual and anti-ethnic jokes in either racial group, their findings pointed to an interesting supposition. They suggest that previous studies have neglected the importance of humor as a reenforcing agent in group relations. They advocate the study of joking and humor as means of seeking social approval and strengthening the social ties of the group.

Pitchford (1960), attempting to develop a theoretical model for humor in the social structure, reported humor functioning as a means of reaching a consensus, a social control (Bergson), and an

introduction of competition and social conflict.

Goldman (1960) found Negro humor to be a result of their position in American society. He emphasized this humor as a reflection of the tension between the races.

La Fave demonstrated that ethnic humor responses depend upon the social influence of group identification. Whether the group is esteemed or disparaged impacts on the funny or unfunny designation of jokes. Beneath ethnic humor lies the hostility and aggression that is consistent with all of the purposes of tendentious joking, a term introduced by Freud and to be examined in the following chapter. Ethnic jokes require cultural suppositions that are sometimes simple (X people are dumb or dirty) and sometimes more complex.

Operating in ethnic humor are both the incongruity and superiority theories previously discussed. If a subculture member conforms to the norms of his ethnic group rather than the dominant culture group then his actions become incongruous. The dominant culture member, feeling superior to the ethnic minority individual, sees him as a comic figure.

C.Theories of Bonding

1. Anthropological Accounts

Radcliff-Brown (1940), in a study involving non-Western subjects, made a major contribution to the anthropological studies of humor with his idea of 'the joking relationship'. This relationship is a culturally patterned solution to the interpersonal

problem that is created when two people in a culture with divergent interests (e.g., in-laws) are forced to interact frequently. An almost ritualistic humor develops that allows for a harmless exchange of antagonisms that becomes a mode.

"Who was that lady I saw you with last night?"
"That was no lady, that was my mother-in-law."

The problem with this and most anthropological accounts is that they concern themselves with joking relationships rather than the broader socio-psychological processes involved in humor.

Goldstein (1977) observes that few cross-cultural studies of humor have been done. The major conclusion to be drawn from the studies carried out (Brant, 1972; Kappferer, 1972; Goldstein, Silverman, and Anderson, 1976; and Shultz, 1976) is that there are no significant differences between national or cultural groups. There is more cross-cultural agreement than disagreement. Researchers agree that differences relate to the salience of content rather than the dynamics of the humor process. This conclusion impacts significantly upon my own studies involving cultural differences between British and American children's responses to humorous books written by authors of both cultures. These results will be discussed in the chapter detailing my empirical studies.

2. Sociological Accounts

Martineau (1972) proposes a model of the social functions of humor including humor as a social process and as a medium of

communication. He attempts to analyze both intragroup and intergroup humor focusing on one group as well as the interaction between groups. In his analysis of humor within the group he judges humor to be a solidifying element when it is judged as esteeming by the members of the group. Esteeming humor provides positive reinforcement thereby strengthening the social bond of the group. There is also a type of self-disparaging humor that group members indulge in to allow the admission of faults and weaknesses in a humorous vein among in-group members. This has been documented by Wolff et al (1934) pertaining to Jews, and by Middleton (1959) pertaining to Negroes. This has a direct impact upon the entire area of ethnic joking.

Sociologists support the assumption that humor is socially learned and intensified as part of each social structure. Social-psychologists agree that the group setting heightens or diminishes the humorous response of the individual members. Ethnic humor as a reflection of aggression or feelings of superiority facilitated by the group process has also been analyzed. The subject of ethnic and racial jokes has significance as an outgrowth of children's taboo humor. We will see from the work of Wolfenstein in my psychological section and the work of the Opies in my language section that the taboo, like ethnic and racial joking, is established through social interaction and reinforced by the peer group. Anthropological studies attempting to isolate cultural differences in humor have had negative results.

D. Group Influence on the Child: Learning the 'Rules'

Having proposed that social patterns and interactions of the group appear to influence the individual's reaction to humorous situations, we turn to the research concerning the child and his reactions to humor in a group setting. Two groups have the most influence upon the child: the family and the peer group, with the peer group taking precedence during the school years. Once the child understands the commonplace in his world, he is prepared for the discrepant. He is then ready to shift boundaries to accommodate the incongruous. The peer group for the society of children is a play place where they create their own humor on their own terms.

It is conceivable that the formal games of later childhood have their natural history in very early playful, social experiences. Playing by the rules may be traced to the repetitive and predictable patterns that children learn from their interaction with adults, primarily parents. The child needs guidance in learning the rules and is generally helped toward this goal by his relationship with supportive adults. Only after early experience with adults, when the child learns the pleasure of participating in rule-structured activity, can he join in games with peers who have also learned to respect the rules.

Investigators agree that the rule structure of human play and games makes the child sensitive to the rules of culture and society (Piaget, 1965; Bruner, 1976; Garvey, 1977). Garvey focuses on social play with others as of primary importance. The earliest signs of play are seen in the child's contact with his parents.

Studies of pairs of children in a single setting detail their interaction in a social setting. Parent modeling of literal behavior is mimicked by the child in play situations as children take on the identities of family members. 'Mommies' and 'Daddies' were predictably depicted together, often joined by 'Baby'. Family roles often coincided with functional roles: Daddy is the protector, Mommy cooks the meals. This kind of social play has rules that children implicitly create and recognize, even while distinguishing between make-believe and reality. The maturing child becomes more influenced by cultural and environmental factors.

Piaget suggests two sources of rules: those rules made by adult influence, and those mutually reached between the adult and the child or by the child alone. Adult-influenced rules are those of social behavior and child-influenced rules are those of self restraint and self determination. Very young children learn the rules out of respect for older children and adults. Once the child receives a system of rules, he regards them as a moral necessity, sacred and unchangeable. Around the age of ten, there is a complete transformation of the rule system. The child views the rules no longer as laws that cannot be changed, but as free and mutual decisions that may be modified and adapted to the particular group. When the 'rule of cooperation' replaces the 'rule of constraint' it too becomes a moral necessity. Since the rules are now internal and dependent upon the free collective will of the children, the child is moved to reciprocate and hence exhibit a state of morality, bonding him to his peers.

Bruner studied pairs of the mother/child combination playing 'peek-a-boo' and concluded that the repetitions in the procedure of the game evolve into a rule-structured system. The game illustrates clearly differentiated participant roles and an internal structure consisting of actions divided between the participants. The game is successful when each participant respects the rules, that is the shared agreement on the procedure of the game, and his willingness to conform to that designated procedure.

Playing with the rules, upsetting convention, can be a source of fun for the child. Bruner describes play as a 'special way of violating fixity'. Garvey describes a boy of two who, after trying on his father's hat, substitutes a sand bucket, and finally one of his father's galoshes. Children will constantly play and test rules and limits, not only with formal game structures, but with social rules as well. The child, in the classroom, who knows the rule against talking during a lesson, will whisper furtively trying to escape detection by the teacher. He is stretching the rules knowing full well what the boundaries are. Garvey, in her discussion of play with rules, cites two main types of rule challenges: adult-imposed and child-imposed. In the adult-imposed rule situation, the constraints were often inferred: the children acted as if they had to remain in the observation room even when they were not told to do so. Opening the door and peeking out and abruptly shutting the door prompted conspiratorial giggles. The child-imposed restraints were social in nature, sometimes playfully endangering the relationships between the children. The practice of

teasing presented a threat to the interpersonal relations between the children. The boundaries were stretched to their limits until the victim appeared on the verge of anger. It was at this point that the aggressor was stopped, either by the victim or his own sense that he had gone beyond the tolerable limits of his game. By playing with the rules imposed by his peer group, as well as those restraints imposed by adults, the child learns the nature of the rules of the social system.

Once the child has internalized the 'rules' (the congruous), he is ready to accept the incongruous, the deviation from those rules. In a sense, this is where real humor begins. The child is cognitively aware of the mismatch and recognizes its appearance. Humor results at the moment of spontaneous recognition of the incongruity, whether it is an adult dressed as a clown or a dog walking on its hind legs.

E. Children's Humor and the Group Setting: Current Research

Contemporary researchers continue to show an interest in the group influence on humor and indicate that children, as well as adults, respond to jokes and funny stories according to the norms of the group. The implication is that shared humor elicits more response than unshared humor. Experience indicates that jokes are meant to be shared and so cannot be as successful when the teller has no audience. The presence of one or more peers during the presentation of funny material, whether auditory or visual, naturally influences the participants. Who among us has not at some

time joined in group laughter when the origin of that laughter has not been understood?

The question of social setting and its impact on children's responses to humor received scant attention until the 1970's when Chapman and Foot studied it. In a 1975 experiment, Chapman proposed the theory that shared humor evokes more mirth and overt response than unshared. Subjects were 140 in all, 70 boys and 70 girls 7-8 years of age of the middle-class stratum. Children, wearing earphones, listened to two recordings (one story, one song), while being observed through a one-way screen. Responses were electronically recorded. Subjects were divided into same sex dyads, triads, and single groups. Ratings were laughing, smiling, and looking. Results demonstrated that laughter, smiling, and mirth increased as pairs of confederates looked at each other less. The association with humor rating diminished and were non-significant in the analysis. The experimenter concluded that the shared social situation rather than humor is important in facilitating children's humorous laughter.

In two additional studies, Chapman and Foot (1976, 77) were concerned with the responsiveness of children to each other rather than to the humor itself. A carpeted, curtained children's playroom was the setting which included a concealed video camera. In the first study, 100 seven year olds (50 boys, 50 girls) from a low-middle class segment of society were shown a short (6 minute) cartoon comedy film. The children were in pairs of the same sex with an experimenter present in all. A 2x2 factorial design was

used in which the children were placed either near to or far from the experimenter. Results showed that children in all conditions smiled and laughed more in the near company of the experimenter.

In a second study, using the same materials and methods as the first, pairs of children were compared with children in isolation. Results showed that both boys and girls laughed more with companions than in isolation. In addition, girls laughed and smiled more with boys than with other girls.

In the Chapman and Foot experiments, there is no way to ascertain what made the children laugh. Laughter data were not considered reliable and therefore were not analyzed statistically. The only result obtained suggested no gross differences in responses to the films. The video recordings did not permit accurate responses to humor stimuli. Anecdotal observation revealed that children eagerly looked forward to and reacted to incidents involving slapstick humor. The examiners concluded that these incidents prompted social interaction. Chapman and Foot are proposing that humor and laughter are fundamental to social exchange. They submit that the social influence increases with age and that large groups engage in more mirth than small groups. While the experimenters enlighten us on the social aspects of humor, they do not tell us what the children find funny.

In another study related to social setting, Perost (1977), investigated the effects of crowding on humor in subjects between the ages of 10 and 20. Social density (different sized groups in same sized spaces) and spatial density (same number in different

sized spaces) were used in the investigation. In the spatial density groups, humor increased from pre-adolescence to a peak in middle adolescence (14-16). In the social density groups, the greatest effect was in pre-adolescence (10-12). Children of pre-adolescence were especially susceptible to what others in their own age group regard as funny. The higher the social density, the more humorous the reaction (smiles, giggles, laughs) present in the group. Perost proposes that maximum social density in pre-adolescent years may indicate the child's attempt to discover what should be regarded as humorous. High social density situations present more opportunity to judge degrees of funniness since there is a high degree of humorous reaction. The high level of inherent stress of mid-adolescence signifies a decrease in the social learning function in situations of high spatial density.

The analysis of Kane, Suls, and Tedeschi (1977) relates to group processes but emphasizes the individual within the group rather than the group itself. The focus is on the source of humor and the social functions it serves. The individual invokes humor in order to expose his own taboos or values, and to uncover those of his fellow group members. This process is cited as a basis for the formation of relationships with others, as well as a 'face-saving' device. Laughter is used to communicate the transformation from a serious to a non-serious situation.

The data collected in these studies suggests that social intimacy promotes responsiveness to humor and that the absence of that intimacy decreases responsiveness. One appears to be dependent

upon the other especially when social intimacy is very high.

Chapman et al (1980) point out that the literature concerning the social psychology of the adult is far more comprehensive than the corresponding literature for children. Informal observations have led them to speculate that typically adult functions of humor appear in children around the ages of seven or eight. Humor varies according to the 'peck order' in the classroom; the clown is popular but rarely a leader; humor serves children as a 'coping strategy.' A second study with four, five, and six year olds illustrated the use of ethnic ties and the use of humor to increase or diminish group esteem.

The implicit suggestion in all of these studies is that children gradually learn that humor depends upon the social responsiveness of the group. Children appear to need peer group approval as their individuality succumbs to peer pressure. The assumption is that the shift from individuality to group compliance is developmental. This is a subject I shall return to in my empirical study. The notion of shared humor having more effect upon children than unshared humor has enormous significance in my study of children's responses to humorous books. In fact, I anticipate that the group setting will materially effect how children respond to the traditions of humorous literature.

In the following chapter, I shall continue to look for common themes in the investigation of humor, focusing on the social setting and the recognition of the incongruity.

IV PSYCHOLOGICAL STUDIES

Thus far I have been emphasizing two ideas: the first is that incongruity is the principal humor motivator, and the second is that it is through social interaction that the child learns to identify the incongruous. Philosophical studies support the incongruity thesis and sociological studies support the importance of the group setting in motivating a response to humorous stimuli. Psychological studies further develop and enhance the idea of the incongruous as the primary stimulant of humor and the social setting as the place where children learn about humor. Further, the previously examined concepts of researchers (Garvey, Piaget, Bruner), who indicate the area of play as the social learning place for children, will be supported by additional psychological studies.

While philosophers study man in relation to the universe, psychologists study man and his thinking. Humor is a distinctly human achievement. We take laughter and humor for granted but they are exceedingly complicated psychological processes. We say a person has a 'sense of humor' when he responds to ideas and situations that society finds funny, when he laughs a great deal and is easily amused, and when he initiates jokes or funny stories. The ways in which we describe a sense of humor have changed since we learned the particular kind of individual self-consciousness that we associate with the study of psychology. Psychologists studying humor group themselves according to their particular interests. Their investigations center on humor as learned behavior, humor as

an unconscious emotional expression as proposed by Freud, humor as superiority over others, descendants of Hobbes, and humor arising from mismatched ideas or situations, incongruity as introduced by Kant. Before the last ten or fifteen years, investigations of humor centered on the adult. Current investigations of children's humor naturally center on the area of play, where children can most often be found smiling and laughing. In this chapter I shall make an historical survey of the theoretical studies of humor both as learned behavior and as a personality trait, and center on the studies of play as the place where children learn about humor.

A. Humor as Learned Behavior in a Social Setting

Behaviorists, whose empiricism relates them to the philosopher, Hobbes, in their explanations of humor, commonly hold its source to be biological, instinctive, or evolutionary. An outgrowth of J. B. Watson's work (1913), behavioral psychologists believe that almost all psychological functions can be analyzed in terms of the response, and that 'conscious experience' should be excluded from data and replaced by the study of behavior. Evidence of the presence of humor was tied to laughter as a behavior. Spencer (1860), Darwin (1872), Dearborn (1900), McDougall (1922), and Menon (1931) believed that laughter produced a feeling of physical well-being. McDougall (1902, 1922, 1923) suggested that laughter was an instinct and a necessary antidote for sympathy. The ludicrous enables man to bear the depressing side of life and has been responsible for his survival. Eastman (1921) viewed laughter

as an instinct originally associated with play and involving what he calls 'positive and negative currents' of emotional interest which determine various types of humor. Others relate laughter to the primitive assault actions of actual bodily attack which result in ultimate conquest (Kallen, 1911, Crile, 1916, Ludovici, 1932, and Rapp, 1947, 49, 51). Laughter and humor gradually became an acceptable substitute for actual assault. Similarities of contorted facial expressions, thrashing of the limbs, and baring teeth in both fighting and laughing were cited as evidence of their relationship. Rapp (1949), views all forms of wit and humor as descendants of a single prototype: 'thrashing laughter,' a laughter of triumph in a primitive physical duel.

The inherent problem in treating laughter as an expression of humor is that it often appears as an expression of other non-humorous situations such as tickling, teasing, nervousness, play, or the pleasure of simple accomplishment. Admittedly laughter is often a response to a humorous stimulus, but we may be amused and not exhibit the physical signs of laughter. The origin of laughter is not nearly so simple a behavior as to link it indiscriminately with humor.

Berlyne (1960, 1967) draws from theory and empirical findings in the areas of arousal, curiosity, and exploratory behavior in suggesting an explanation for the pleasure induced during the humor process. Linking humor to art and music, he identifies underlying mechanisms that he assumes effect the humor process. Berlyne is mainly concerned with the structure of the stimulus. Citing a wide

scope of behavioral and physiological evidence, he advances his case for the importance of collative stimulus properties in producing the pleasurable feelings in humor. Proposing the importance of the arousal-jag and boost mechanisms in humor, he reinterprets the 'surplus energy' idea of Spencer and the 'discharge of psychic energy' advanced by Freud. Berlyne's cognitive emphasis explains humor as behavior determined by present stimulus situation as well as the collative process that involves past experiences and anticipation of the future. A combination of collative stimuli leads to arousal fluctuation. Although noting that laughter does not always signify a humorous reaction, he sees it behind every humorous response. Like Darwin, Spencer and Freud, Berlyne views laughter as having a physiological root. Eysenck, in a repudiation of Freud's views of humor speculations (1942), calls his humor proposals a 'state and trait' view (1977). People are ranged along a continuum of 'aggressiveness,' or 'sexuality' -- 'going from the very aggressive, or very actively sexual, through average to very non-aggressive and timid, or little concerned with sexual matters.'

Freud cites non-aggressive and non-sexual people as having repressed these unconscious latent tendencies and releasing them in hostile and sexual jokes. Eysenck disagrees and states that extroverted people are more overly aggressive and sexually active and prefer hostile and sexual jokes, while introverts prefer nonsenses jokes and puns. How, then, does one label subjects as introverts or extroverts? On the basis of one experimental setting can we make that rather tenuous conclusion? Like other behavioral suppositions,

this one is far too limited.

Eysenck must be credited for his perception of the problems of stimulus-response experimental speculations and their universal approach that neglects the individual. His proposal isolates personality as the fundamental unit in psychology. The problem, as he sees it, is that experimentalists refuse to consider personality as a useful scientific concept and social psychologists refuse to base the study of personality on biological experimental evidence. Recognizing the generality of the term 'personality,' Eysenck seeks to isolate certain dimensions of personality which are relevant to the extroversion/introversion traits. Surprisingly, he reaches back to the theory of the humors, outlined in my chapter on humor philosophies, as the doctrine able to embrace all aspects of personality. He cites Wilhelm Wundt's refusal to consider the four humor types as mutually exclusive, but rather melancholics and choleric as emotional types and phlegmatics and sanguinics as unemotional. Further, Wundt types choleric and sanguinics as extroverted and phlegmatics and melancholics as introverted. In this fashion, the humors present four continuous dimensions rather than four independent categories. The original four have been extended forming a kind of cross with extreme emotional and unemotional at ends of one dimension and extremely extroverted or introverted people at the ends of the other dimension. In adopting this method of assessing personality types which he suggests are responsible for reactions to humor, Eysenck fails to mention the crucial point made by the Elizabethans; it is an imbalance of these

humors that creates the incongruity, the laughable, that lies at the heart of all humor. Contrary to Eysenck's statements, the Elizabethans did not negate the presence of four humors in each individual, but rather that when one of the humors was disproportionate to the others, oddness or eccentricity of character existed. It is this eccentricity or incongruity that I shall come back to as the core of my speculations about humor.

The attempts to assimilate the origins of humor into the general theories of behavioral psychology leave us with many questions. We know that often laughter is a barometer for humorous responses but we also know that that is not always the case. How can we be sure that the laughter observed is a response to a joke or funny story? If laughing is how one behaves when his sense of humor is aroused how can we tell what he is thinking or feeling? I am also interested in knowing to what extent cognitive development enters into humor appreciation. It also seems clear that we cannot negate the subconscious in the quest for the origins of humor. While I agree that laughter as a behavior has contributed to our understanding of humor we are still seeking clues to inner thoughts and feelings.

1. Behaviorist Learning Theories

I would be remiss in leaving my discussion of the behaviorists and their speculations without noting their contributions to learning theory which impacted on the area of play, a humor place for children. Learning theories in America during the 1930's and

the 1940's were significantly influenced by two kinds of earlier investigations: the conditioned reflex studies of Pavlov (1849-1919) and the puzzle-box experiments of E. L. Thorndike (1874-1949), ~~and~~ (Millar, 1968). Pavlov found in his experiments with dogs that an unlearned reflex response to food would, when repeated, become conditioned to a new stimulus. Thus salivation would begin at the sight of the food dish or the footsteps of the feeder. The dog learns to discriminate between the tone leading to food and the one sounded without food. He responds to the correct one only and eventually erases the conditioned responses which are not followed by the original unconditioned stimuli.

Early behaviorists like Watson viewed learning explained in terms of instinct as fruitless and useless with children and animals, although they were influenced by Pavlov's descriptions of behavior in terms of learning that were based on experimentally precise methods.

Guthrie (1935), closest to Watson's adaptation of Pavlov's tenets, postulated a simple association between stimulus and response as the principal law of learning. Reward is important only as preserving a connection between stimulus and response and so reinforcing it (Millar).

C. L. Hull (1943) viewed reward as essential to learning. Assuming that behavior is motivated by primary drives (hunger), reward is the result of the reduction of a given drive. In his formulation, Hull discovered that secondary drives learned cues that indicate rewards were present. The child learns by imitation and

matches his behavior to that of his parents or older siblings, which in the past has proved successful, in order to satisfy primary needs. Secondary rewards often come in the form of praise or gifts and are effective through previous learning based on some primary drive reduction. The lengthy period of childhood during which parents and other adults satisfy primary needs gives rise to secondary motives, which are satisfied by verbal and social incentives. It is not necessary to repeat the original reward each time the child participates in a particular activity. Some external cues or internal stimuli previously connected with drive reduction are sufficient to reinforce learning.

The real difficulty with the behaviorists is their preoccupation with experimental psychology and the laboratory to the exclusion of the individual and his interaction with society. Although Eysenck recognizes the difficulty in bringing together the ideas of the behaviorists and the social psychologists, he fails to note the dominance of the social setting on an individual's view of humor, and refuses to give any credence to Freud's views of humor as unconsciously motivated. Further, the concept of incongruity as a dominant humor motivator is ignored.

2. Play as Behavior

Learning postulates were naturally extended to include play as an area of human behavior. Susanna Millar says the following about behavioral theory and play:

The main effect that learning or behavior theory has had on the psychology of play is that the subject as such no longer exists.

This attitude, expressed by Schlosberg in 1948, views play as an ambiguous scientifically useless concept. Play is considered by Schlosberg to encompass a variety of behaviors which should only be investigated individually. Schlosberg reduced play to the position of illustrating that children perform less competently than adults. The reward, as a social incentive, may account for the child's competence in a repeated play activity (praise, applause). Millar views the idea that play needs no explanation other than as purely behavioral as responsible for a dearth of studies of play until the late 1960's. Accordingly, I leave the behaviorists here and will not return to them in my discussion of play. Their attitudes are known and do not coincide with mine on children's play and its relation to humor.

B. Humor in Personality Studies: Freudian Postulates

1. The Pre-Freudians

Before Freud's postulations took form, humor in man was described in varying terminology. Herbert Spencer (1860) and William James (1890) discussed humor in physiological terms. Although accepting Kant's incongruity formula, Spencer set out to discover why a perception of an incongruity should lead to laughter. His answer was that muscular motion follows nervous excitation and the discharge of this energy has natural pathways.

Laughter, as a nervous excitation, has its pathways in the face and the muscles of respiration. James said that laughter is an emotion which is accompanied by bodily changes that vary according to the individual. Jokes causing hearty laughter in one leave another much less effected. Theodor Lipps (1898) agreed with Spencer in attributing the reaction of laughter to the perception of an incongruity, a concept already introduced in my philosophical studies chapter.

The investigation of Lipps is crucial to our psychological studies since it is Lipps' work (Komik und Humor) on jokes and their relation to the unconscious that influenced Freud's subsequent studies of humor.

Lipps used jokes to aid in his study of the comic. The joke is only as effective as the teller's ability can make it. Jokes are subjective in nature and become comic when the teller's actions make them so. Lipps suggested a formula for joking in which the concept of 'contrast' is included. It is not, however, a contrast of ideas, but a contrast of contradiction 'between the meaning and the meaningless of the words'. It is the appearance of an incongruity of meanings to which he refers in which meanings are granted to words which we cannot sensibly grant them. It is in this context that his terms 'sense and nonsense' become significant and joking, implicitly, becomes a matter of language as the carrier of the cultural, semantic, social, and psychological features. What once seemed to have meaning is suddenly seen as meaningless. In this case, that is what creates the incongruity and is part of the comic

process. Lipps further points out that when the meaningless or bewildering word becomes illuminated, a comic effect is created. The concept of 'bewilderment and illumination' was first introduced by Heymans (1896), when he suggested that the effect of the joke comes about when illumination succeeds bewilderment. This concept, still influencing contemporary researchers, will be expanded in a subsequent section. While the idea that people laugh at what strikes them as a comic mismatch in the realm of what they may expect to see or experience is easily acceptable, the relationship of these pattern interruptions with concomitant physiological studies is not necessarily visible or easily traceable. It is one thing to know something is funny because someone laughs, but it is quite different to relate the physical process of laughter to the stimulus or cause. As has been pointed out in an earlier section, the physical act of laughing is not always indicative of a response to humor.

2. Release and Relief Concepts

Related to the idea of humor as a physiological process are the release and relief theories of Bliss (1915), Kline (1907), and Gregory (1924). According to Kline, the release of tension that disrupts orderly thought processes results in laughter. The perception of the humorous stimulus creates a freedom that breaks the rules of society and results in feelings of pleasure. Bliss viewed laughter as an involuntary release of repression that expresses subconscious satisfaction. Gregory viewed relief in the

physical act of laughter and all of its varieties. Perhaps his most important point is that laughter may result as a reaction to any emotional state, not principally amusement. The idea that laughter is a release of tension is closely allied to Freud's view of laughter as a release from the repression of psychical energy. Not just a linking of the physical process of laughter to its stimulus, here is the connecting of the subconscious to the release. It is not merely the observable behavior, the laughter, that is noted, but the feelings that are accompanying the physiological process that are crucial. The identification of the physiological as fact is more easily acceptable combined with ideas relating it to the subconscious.

These forerunners to and contemporaries of Freud, are related to him, in a sense, since his views on humor contend that the ludicrous always represents a saving in the expenditure of psychic energy. When energy that is built up in order to occupy certain channels is not or cannot be utilized, it may be discharged in laughter. Thus Freud may be characterized as the best known of the release and relief theorists. In Jokes and Their Relation to the Unconscious (1905), Freud relates Spencer's 'The Physiology of Laughter' to his own explanations of the release of psychical energy, fitting in with his own thoughts. He further states that his own ideas of the effectiveness of unconscious 'psychical processes' are compatible with Lipps'. The strongest link between Lipps and Freud, however, is the notion of an incongruity as the basis for the arousal of humor. As I will show, this view has links with psychological

research both with adults and children and in the literature of the oral and written traditions.

3. Freud

The importance of Sigmund Freud in the study of humor is not a plethora of new and revolutionary ideas, but the order that he brought to a formerly unconnected field of research. Freud was the first to develop the probing of man's 'unconscious' in the study of human behavior. He accomplished this through the exploration of the world of dreams and in 1900 published his 'Interpretation of Dreams.' In a letter to Wilhelm Fliess dated June 12, 1897 (The Origins of Psycho-Analyses, 1954) Freud wrote: 'I must confess that for some time I have been putting together a collection of Jewish anecdotes of deep significance.' It was from this collection that many of his ideas about jokes emanated. Ernest Jones, in his biography of Freud (1955), notes that Freud kept the manuscripts of Three Essays on the Theory of Sexuality and Jokes and Their Relation to the Unconscious on adjoining tables while he worked on them simultaneously. The books were published at almost the same time (1905). It will become clear in the discussion of Freud's proposed purposes and techniques of jokes how human sexuality and the unconscious emerge in joking.

Several influences were at work in motivating Freud to study jokes. First, the influence of the work of Theodor Lipps probably began as a result of Lipps' paper on the unconscious read at a conference on psychoanalysis in 1897. It became the basis for a

lengthy discussion in the last chapter of The Interpretation of Dreams (1900). When Lipps published 'Komik und Humor' in 1898, Freud was encouraged to embark on a similar course himself. Secondly, Freud strongly felt the need to group and classify jokes according to their characteristics. His criticism of prior works analyzing humor was their failure to establish connections with each other.

...they are disjecta membra, which we should like to see combined into an organic whole. When all is said and done, they contribute to our knowledge of jokes no more than would a series of anecdotes to the description of some personality of whom we have a right to ask for a biography. We are entirely without insight into the connection that presumably exists between the separate determinants....(Freud, 1905, p.14)

The third factor influencing Freud is directly related to the unconscious. He draws attention to the fact that the process present in the production of jokes shows substantial agreement with the process of dreaming. Their dissimilarity lies in social behavior.

A dream is a completed asocial mental product....
A joke, on the other hand, is the most social of all mental functions....(Freud, 1905, p.179)

Freud inherited from Lipps an interest in jokes as they related to the unconscious. The identification of incongruity as the heart of humor was Lipps' premise and it impacted directly on both the purposes and techniques of jokes as Freud saw them.

Freud identifies two major classes of jokes: innocent, defined as having no purpose, and tendentious, defined as purposeful. In

the innocent joke it is the technique which stimulates our mental process and results in feelings of pleasure. It is a moderate pleasure and rarely achieves outbursts of laughter. Tendentious jokes are either hostile and aggressive or obscene and sexual. Joking allows us, says Freud, to evade society's moral restrictions and give in to our hostile aggressions which would, in other circumstances, be unacceptable. In the same way that joking permits us to relieve our hostile aggressions, it allows us to make sexual innuendos and to laugh at obscenities that would ordinarily be unacceptable. The repressive barrier is lifted.

In addition to identifying the purposes of jokes, Freud cites the technique of joking. He identifies two major joking techniques: verbal or expressive and conceptual jokes. In the verbal joke, the humor lies in the words themselves, while conceptual jokes represent something that cannot be expressed directly - an 'allusion' in which something is omitted. These joking techniques produce four kinds of jokes: innocent-verbal, innocent-conceptual, tendentious-verbal, and tendentious-conceptual. Verbal jokes have three major forms: condensation, multiple use of the same material, and double meanings. Freud defines the major technique in condensation as the formation of the composite word.

The Christmas season is described as an 'alcoholiday'. (Freud, 1905, p.22)

Multiple use of the same material can utilize parts of or whole words, a different order of words, or a modification of a word.

Mr. and Mrs. X live in fairly grand style. Some people think that the husband has earned a lot and so she has been able to lay by a bit; others again think that the wife has lain back a bit and has been able to earn a lot. (Ibid, p.33)

Puns, the play-on-words, and the double entendre are the most representative of the double meaning technique.

A doctor, as he came away from a lady's bedside, said to her husband, "I don't like her looks". "I've not liked her looks for a long time," said the husband. (Ibid, p.37)

Freud names major categories of conceptual jokes as displacement (of a thought process), faulty reasoning (which has the appearance of logic), and 'sense and nonsense' (deviation from normal thinking, indirect representation, and representation of the opposite). Several examples serve to clarify this technique.

Itzig had been declared fit for service in the artillery. He was clearly an intelligent lad, but intractable and without any interest in the service. One of his superior officers, who was friendly disposed to him, took him on one side and said to him: "Itzig, you're no use to us. I'll give you a piece of advice: buy yourself a cannon and make yourself independent!"
(Ibid, p.56, sense and nonsense)

This example is based on Lipps' 'meaning out of the meaningless' cited in a previous section. The advice is nonsense and serves to show Itzig how stupid his behavior is.

Two Jews were discussing baths. "I have a bath every year," said one of them, "whether I need one or not." (Ibid, p. 72, representation of the opposite)

The joke in this example lies in the failure of the speaker to recognize that his statement of cleanliness only serves to point up his lack of cleanliness.

A gentleman entered a pastry cook's shop and ordered a cake; but he soon brought it back and asked for a glass of liqueur instead. He drank it and began to leave without having paid. The proprietor detained him. "What do you want?" asked the customer. - "You've not paid for the liqueur." - "But I gave you the cake in exchange for it." - "You didn't pay for that either." - "But I hadn't eaten it." (Ibid, p.60, faulty reasoning)

Freud identifies the motivation for joking as subjective in nature.

As regards jokes, we know that the sources of the pleasure that is to be fostered lie in the subject himself and not in outside people. (Ibid, p.181)

In tendentious jokes, the teller may be a possible neurotic or eccentric whose jokes reveal his reactions to his environment, an ethnic or racial minority who finds it's participation easier than direct aggressive criticism, or one who releases his inhibitions through joking. Innocent jokes may be used to show one's cleverness or simply to share the joke with someone. The sharing aspect can also be applied to tendentious jokes since a joke is really only funny when it is shared. This points up the satisfaction of both teller and listener in joking. Jokes about inanimate objects need only two participants, but when a person is the object of the joke, a third person is introduced. The pleasure is calculated with a third person in mind, the arousal of laughter in another arouses

laughter in the narrator. Therefore, both the teller and the listener are emotionally involved. Joking's aim is to produce pleasure in the listener, but the pleasure depends on the teller's purpose and technique.

Freud deals with virtually all forms of jokes when he identifies verbal and conceptual jokes. Jokes are funny either because of the way the language is used to tell them or the ideas that are formulated from them. The four kinds of identifiable jokes according to Freud can be found in literature for children.

'The Day Zero Piddled While Home Burned'
(Cresswell, 1977, p.28, innocent-verbal)

Alice had been looking over his shoulder with some curiosity. "What a funny watch!" she remarked. "It tells the day of the month, and doesn't tell what o'clock it is!"
"Why should it?" muttered the Hatter. "Does your watch tell you what year it is?"
"Of course not," Alice replied very readily: "but that's because it stays the same year for such a long time together."
"Which is just the case with mine," said the Hatter. (Carroll, 1962, p.95, innocentconceptual: faulty reasoning)

There was a Young Person of Smyrna,
Whose Grandmother threatened to burn her;
But she seized on the Cat,
And said, "Granny, burn that!
You incongruous Old Woman of Smyrna!"
(Lear, 1972, tendentious-verbal)

There was a young lady of Niger
Who smiled as she rode on a tiger;
They returned from the ride
With the lady inside,
And the smile on the face of the tiger.
(Ibid, tendentious-conceptual)

Humor is crucial to all Freud had to say about the unconscious. It

is through the study of jokes that he was able to demonstrate the feelings that people released. Both aggressive and sexual feelings are present in large numbers of jokes and funny stories and Freud's orderly presentation has made a major contribution to our understanding of how and why people make jokes. In carrying on Lipps' concept of 'sense and nonsense' he strengthens my belief in the incongruous as the beginning of our awareness of humor. We have progressed from the pure physiological process of laughter to what emotions are involved when that laughter erupts. The physiological and release and relief theorists offer only partial explanations. Freud, who offered, not only the release of 'psychical energy' as the process creating feelings of pleasure, but also an understanding of how and why joking occurs, carries those explanations much further.

4. Incongruity - 'Bewilderment and Illumination' and Its Proponents

Freud's connection to Lipps and his concept of 'bewilderment and illumination' in jokes leads naturally into incongruity and its proponents.

The perception of an incongruity, the violation of an individual's expectations, has long been proposed as a necessary condition for experiencing humor. The humor arises from disjointed, mismatched pairings of ideas or situations that are divergent from customary patterns. Previously noted theorists (Kant, Schopenhauer, Spencer, Heymans, Lipps) were among the early proponents of this view. Many other investigators have utilized the basic tenets of

incongruity theory in their conception of humor. Guthrie viewed humor in a disharmonious situation only if there is a simultaneous assurance of safety. Leacock (1935) described humor as the contrast between what something should be and something distorted. Willmann (1940) cited the existence of humor in the contrast shown between ordinary and shocking ideas. Later researchers identifying the mismatch as crucial to experiencing humor were Berlyne, Fry(1963), Koestler(1967), McGhee(1971), and Shultz(1972, 1976). It was Lipps, however, who carried the mere perception of an incongruity one step farther. Adopting Heyman's concept of 'bewilderment and illumination, 'Lipps speculated that the effect of the joke came about when illumination succeeds bewilderment. The following joke quoted by Freud(1905) and directly traceable to Heymans illustrates this concept.

The lottery agent, Hirsch-Hyacinth boasts, "And, as true as God shall grant me all good things, Doctor, I sat beside Saloman Rothschild and he treated me quite as his equal-quite famillionairely."

The word (famillionairely), that is the heart of the joke, at first appears incomprehensible and therefore bewilders the listener. The dawning of comprehension solves this bewilderment and produces the humor. Lipps enlarged Heymans first stage of enlightenment by adding a second stage to the bewilderment: the listener's realization of his bewilderment. Upon hearing the unfamiliar word and perceiving it as an error, the momentary confusion is followed by comprehension of the true meaning. According to Lipps, it is the

second illumination, the stage during which the listener recognizes that the normally meaningless word has been the source of the entire joke, that the humor emerges. The listener expects the joke to utilize familiar words and instead the unintelligible word is used and so creates the incongruity.

Acknowledging the importance of the psychoanalytic view of humor which proposes pleasure as being partly derived from previously mastered anxiety, there are questions it cannot answer. While incongruity is acknowledged, its importance to linguistic play is not emphasized. In addition, the implicit understanding of the ordinary as a prerequisite to the appreciation of the incongruous has no place in Freud's views for it is connected to the social¹ psychological school of humor. Perhaps this, the total absence of the importance of the social aspects of humor, is our answer to why Freud is not enough for an understanding of humor in either adults or children. However, it is important to note that, some of the threads of my thesis are centered in Freud's work. There is the incongruity that I have already mentioned and there is the sharing aspect of joking, the social setting that I find crucial to the appreciation of humor. In addition, with the identification of the language of joking, Freud's work is the forerunner to contemporary research that indicates that the acquisition of language and its development impacts directly upon the development of a sense of humor. This will be investigated more fully in a subsequent chapter.

C. PLAY: Its Evolution and Meaning

What is play and when does it begin? Is it an infant shaking a rattle? A child skipping rope? A funny story? When, if ever, does play indicate a sense of humor? Is it a forerunner to or connected to adult play? If we are to accept Karl Groos' theory(1899), play is practice for the skills needed to survive in adult life. G. Stanley Hall's 'recapitulation theory'(1897) proposes that playful behavior changes with age, and that this play reflects the evolutionary chain of man from prehistoric hominids to the present. James Sully(1902) suggests that laughter is a sign of play and an essential element in social play. Infants smile and laugh soon after birth (Millar, 1968; Sutton-Smith, 1974; Garvey, 1977) and cooing, tickling, and gentle noises are all positive stimuli for smiling and laughing. Since play is found in the period of expanding knowledge of self and the physical and social world, and thus a learning behavior, it is through learning that the child develops an awareness of the incongruous, which is the earliest form of humor, my proposal is to study what part play takes in the development of this sense of humor. I believe that Bruner sums up the question of the importance of play with the following statement:

play is the principal business of childhood, the vehicle of improvisation and combination, the first carrier of rules systems through which a world of cultural restraints is substituted for the operation of impulse. (Bruner, 1976, p.20)

1. Psychoanalytic Interpretations of Play

The study of play is largely dominated by psychoanalytic

interpretations mainly for diagnostic and therapeutic purposes. Since the 1930's, the dominant theoretical interpretation of play has come from Freud. Freud's views on play(1959) are closely associated with his assumptions about human behavior as related to pleasure and pain. In Beyond the Pleasure Principle(1955) Freud's often repeated explanation of play is the following:

We see that children in their play repeated everything that has made a great impression on them in actual life, so that they thereby abreact the strength of the impression and so to speak make themselves masters of the situation.

In Freud's earlier interpretation of play (Collected Works, 1959) the child distinguishes play from reality but uses objects and situations from the real world to repeat pleasurable experiences and order events in a pleasurable way. The child can play at being grown-up and behave as an adult. From this imaginative play to creative production is a small step. Art is simply an elaboration and refinement of daydreams, wishes, and fantasies. Freud refined his theory of pleasure to include the playing out of unpleasant events in fantasy because the repetition reduces the tensions and allows the child to master the disturbing event. It is a striving for pleasure.

Martin Grotjahn(1975) elaborates on Freud's ideas that pleasure in play resembles pleasure in the arts. The unconscious meaning in literature, art, and entertainment lie 'beyond laughter.' Laughter is the creative communication between the conscious and the unconscious that leads to happiness.

The most direct influence of Freud's views on play was on the various forms of therapy which were derived from psychoanalysis. Post-Freudian Susan Isaacs(1930), in her psychoanalytic studies of children, indicates that freedom of dramatic play allows children to work out their inner conflicts externally and so lessen their internal pressures and anxieties. The child is then more easily able to control his behavior and accept societal limitations.

Imaginative play builds a bridge by which the child can pass from the symbolic values of things to active inquiry into their real construction and real way of working. (p. 102)

The child is freed to further his ego development and gain a new sense of reality. Thought and fantasy are interrelated but the child beyond the first three years rarely confuses them. Like Freud, Isaacs asserts that the child knows when he is totally involved in a make-believe situation that it is make-believe. Through continuing experiences, both individual and by observing others, and intellectual growth, the child internalizes the patterns of the objective world and reflects it in his responses. In later development, it is through literature and art that fantasy is directly expressed.

Two other post-Freudians, Melanie Klein and Anna Freud, have developed a whole technique of psychoanalysis of play that is based on 'unconscious' ludic symbols. Klein(1932) did not merely analyze the dreams of her child patients, but gave them dolls and toys and observed the symbolism that was produced by the child with the aid of the toys. Her assumptions were that the free play of the child

represented the wishes, fears, pleasures, and conflicts of which he was unaware. Treating children with severe ego defects and psychoses, her play techniques discovered that inhibition in play is a common neurotic symptom. Anna Freud (1973), in a study of the normal and the abnormal in children, suggested that if the normal development of play is hampered, the child will be unable to progress from dependency to independency. Her stages of development which progress from the child's body to soft objects to play materials and eventual pleasure in the play activity itself are described as the development followed by all normally endowed and organically unimpaired children.

Relating to children, Freud extends 'play' as the first stage of the joke. The child plays with words and experiences pleasure when he discovers repetition of sounds or a rediscovery of sounds. Pleasure encourages him to continue this word play without regard to word meaning or sentence coherence. When the child becomes able to reason critically this stage of play is rejected as meaningless. The child then searches for a way to continue the feeling of pleasure and the 'jest,' the second preliminary state of jokes, sets in.

a. Verbal Play & Psychoanalytic Thought

Martha Wolfenstein (1954) recognized joking as an important emotional resource and one which has its beginnings in childhood. This led to her interest in the development of joking and humor which she analyzed in the psychoanalytic tradition. Wolfenstein's analysis of children's humor is based on Freud's hypothesis

concerning jokes and wit. She theorizes that children's anxieties produce jokes. Children, because of their small size, are often anxious about adult superiority and adult-imposed rules. Joking allows them to allieviate their frustrations and to transfer feelings of pain into pleasure. Her conclusions were based on empirical studies done in New York with 90 children in a city independent school. She interviewed children aged 4-12 to elicit jokes they knew or created. Teachers collected stories and observations of the children in the classroom were also carried out. Children were from urban, primarily professional, Jewish families with above average intelligence and highly developed verbal skills. Most subjects were interviewed once, but some two or even three times. Substantial differences were found in the style of joke¹telling between children under the age of six and those older. The younger children provided original jokes while those beyond the age of six relied on ready-made jokes. Wolfenstein cited the emergence of repressions as responsible for the less spontaneous socially acceptable ready-made jokes. Children under the age of six did not understand the double meanings provided by word jokes and gave single meaning reactions ("Can I try that dress on in the window? You can if you want to but I'd rather you tried it on in the changing room"). Puns and the play-on words, found in Freud's category of double meanings, are the favorite form of children's jokes (ages 6-12).

Wolfenstein refers to a twelve year old boy who drew a picture of a man with a fruit stand titled 'Custer's Last Stand.' The word

play with the word stand is merely a playful pretense of confusion. Similarly, a funny story written by a ten year old boy containing an episode involving the shooting and death of a store proprietor is illustrative of the play-on-words. The body is laid in a 'bier called Rheingold.' Here the shift of meaning is between the homonyms bier and beer. Wolfenstein suggests that children's development in joking is two-sided: they develop inhibitions to suppress their impulses and they master techniques with which to circumvent these inhibitions.

Wolfenstein analyzed how the joke preferences of children vary according to age. Her developmental scheme explains the change in the overall form and style of the 'joke facade' in wordplay, as well as in children's ability to discriminate between joking and nonjoking forms. Form progresses from the riddle at age six to the anecdotal joke at age eleven or twelve.

Although we owe much to Wolfenstein's analysis of children's verbal humor, there is more to her explanations than she outlines. While she relates children's speech play to their development, her psychoanalytic approach omits the cultural and sociolinguistic aspects in which children's traditional speech play strongly effects their reactions to experience and result in increased sensitivity to roles and relationships within the peer group.

2. Piaget and the Development of Play

Before the theories of Piaget were made public, explanations of play were used mainly as tools in educational and therapeutic

techniques. Piaget studied the intellectual development of children in the belief that, the logical analysis of what children 'know' can be illuminated by how children logically think. It is important to stress that for Piaget age norms are only approximate. The timing depends on many factors including environment and physical maturation and therefore many individual differences exist. In addition, development is both gradual and continuous. Sudden transformations do not occur in a child's behavior and characteristics do not abruptly disappear. As each succeeding stage develops, characteristics of the previous ones are still retained and new abilities added. One must also understand that Piaget's stages are theoretical, abstracted from observed behavior which merely illustrates the stage.

Piaget's theory of play is closely bound up with his detailing of the growth of intelligence (1953). Two processes are fundamental to all organic development: assimilation and accommodation. The simplest example of assimilation is the process of eating where food is changed during the process of being taken into the organism. Accommodation is the organism's adjustment to the external world. The two processes are complementary and involve each other. In assimilation the organism changes the information it receives while in accommodation the organism makes change in order to adjust to the outside world. Intellectual development is a result of the continual interplay between assimilation and accommodation. Intelligent adaptation occurs when the two processes are equally balanced. When the two are not in balance one of two situations

exists: accommodation dominates resulting in imitation, or assimilation dominates resulting in play. Play is pure assimilation which changes incoming information to suit the requirements of the individual. Play and imitation are integral parts of the development of intelligence and go through identical stages.

The forerunner of play begins in the sensory-motor period (birth to two years) with the newborn infant's capacity to go beyond the reflex stage and repeat previous activities; what Piaget calls 'reproductive assimilation.' This is doing what was done before as long as the actions are comfortably within the capacities of the infant. In the latter stage of the sensory-motor period (12-18 mos.) there is an active interest in the production of new behavior. The child attempts to develop new means for dealing with obstacles and becomes increasingly adept at imitation of new actions. The most striking achievement of this stage is the appearance of the capacity to represent an object or action which cannot actually be seen. Such representation impacts directly on the progress of imitation. The child no longer needs to try out his imitations physically but performs these movements mentally. When he has correctly organized his mental trials, he performs the correct action. The child also becomes capable of imitation for the first time of a model that is not present. Piaget refers to this as 'deferred imitation' since the child must be summoning forth the absent model in some internal symbolic form, perhaps a visual image.

At 1.4 J. had a visit from a little boy of 1.6
whom she used to see from time to time, and who,

in the course of the afternoon got into a terrible temper. He screamed as he tried to get out of a playpen and pushed it backwards, stamping his feet. J. stood watching him in amazement, never having witnessed such a scene before. The next day, she herself screamed in her playpen and tried to move it, stamping her foot lightly several times in succession. The imitation of the whole scene was most striking. Had it been immediate, it would naturally not involved representation, but in coming as it did after an interval of twelve hours, it must have involved some representative or prerepresentative element. (1962-p.63).

In the final stage of this period, not only action in the absence of objects is begun, but also symbolization and make-believe become possible.

Symbolic or make-believe play is characteristic of the period of representational intelligence from approximately 2-7 years of age (1962). Symbolic play involves the attribution of unusual names to ordinary things and unusual designations to ordinary actions. Piaget describes his daughter's symbolic play:

...she saw a pillow whose fringed edges vaguely recalled those of her pillow; she seized it, held a fold of it in her right hand, sucked the thumb of the same hand and lay down on her side, laughing hard. She kept her eyes open, but blinked from time to time as if she were alluding to closed eyes. Finally, laughing more and more, she cried 'Nene' (No, no). The same cloth started the same game on the following days. (p. 96)

Piaget interpreted this behavior as an illustration of playful use of concrete symbols which resulted from his daughter's attitude of make-believe. Her laughter indicated her knowledge that the cloth was merely a symbol for her pillow. Make-believe derives from

the child's intellectual processes at this stage; his extreme 'ego-centrism' and his highly individualized use of images and symbols. During this period the child's fantasy play becomes progressively elaborate and organized. Sensory-motor and intellectual practice become more constructive as the child's experiences with the physical and social environments grow and adaptation to reality evolves. The child needs less to use symbolic substitutes and distortions of reality as he becomes socially adapted. Pure assimilation comes to an end at the period of representative intelligence with the decline of 'ego-centrism.' Up until about the age of seven or eight the child's world is egocentric; he assumes his own understanding and does not ask for explanations. By age seven or eight, genuine verbal understanding appears as the child becomes social. Once the child adapts himself to others he is forced to think about his views in relation to the views of others.

The egocentric child assumes his own understanding and doesn't feel the need to ask for explanations of jokes or funny stories.

Why did the moron take two hats to the ballgame?
Because he heard it was a double-header.

The six-year old may explain a 'double-header' (two consecutively played baseball games) as a player with two heads and illustrates the need for self-appreciation of the joke only. The pre-operational child will laugh at a joke or repeat jokes he has heard because he has become familiar with the joke format and knows laughter is expected. Piaget (1948) remarked how children often

supply their own meanings without being aware of their misunderstanding. Upon hearing the following previously noted riddle, the pre-operational child will have difficulty comprehending the dual levels of incongruity:

Why did the cookie cry?
Because its mother had been a wafer so long.

There are two elements of incongruity: the idea of cookies crying and the initial incongruous response. The answer contains its own linguistic ambiguity of 'a wafer' (away for) and the additional incongruity of a cookie having a mother. The pre-operational child will be apt to get only the simple level of the mismatch (the cookie crying because it missed its mother) and miss entirely the linguistic play between 'wafer' and 'away for.' His egocentrism will satisfy his interpretation of the riddle.

Fantasy, both in joke-telling and story-reading, is a kind of play. Accepting Piaget's premise that symbolic play involves a child's awareness of make-believe, can we not then argue that jokes and funny stories are a part of that make-believe world? As the child develops and can fantasize while reading these stories on his own, his world of fantasy becomes a solely personal experience. All of the experiences that he has stored, all of the stories he has heard, and the gradual process of assimilation and accommodation that has taken place reflect themselves in his appreciation of the story.

Following Piaget's principles of cognitive acquisition, McGhee (1976) lists four stages in the development of incongruity humor.

The first two stages correspond with Piaget's two initial stages of symbolic play and consist of distortions of actions and verbal schemas directed at objects (ages two and three). In verbal schemas, the child gives names to objects or events that they know to be incorrect. The third stage, (ages three to seven), has a heightened level of humor attributable to a more advance understanding of words, but the distortion of concepts may or may not be communicated verbally. During this stage, the child develops a firmer belief in his concepts and a fantasy creation (cat with two heads) is perceived as humorous. The acquisition of what Piaget termed concrete operational thinking around the age of six or seven corresponds to stage four in McGhee's theory. The child comprehends and appreciates verbal humor in more ambiguous and abstract forms and takes the first step toward adult humor. The following joke is used to illustrate verbal humor in the abstract:

"Well, I see you have a new dog. I thought you didn't like dogs." "Well, I don't but my wife bought a lot of dog soap on sale, so we had to get a dog to use it up."

In order to react with humor, the child must identify one or more of the following incongruities: buying a dog when you dislike dogs, buying something on sale when you can't use it, buying a dog to use the soap you bought and compounding the initial incongruity. McGhee is pointing out the progression from recognition of the simple visual incongruity to the more complex verbal incongruity that requires comprehension of ambiguous ideas. The young child who puts his hat on backwards recognizes the incongruity of his act but

would not comprehend a verbal riddle. Riddles are complex verbal puzzles that become familiar to children about the age of five or six when they begin school. There are various kinds of riddles and understanding them depends on the level of the child's knowledge of the language. A simple, true riddle (What goes up when the rain comes down? Your umbrella.) is easily understood because it does not depend upon verbal clues. A more verbally complex riddle (When is a door not a door? When it is ajar.) is much more difficult and beyond the capabilities of the average pre-school child. This child will visualize 'a jar' that holds jam or jelly and laugh at the concept of confusing it with a door. But that is not the point of the riddle which depends upon the knowledge of the word 'ajar' meaning open. My own experience with eight year olds indicates that even at that age, the word 'ajar' is not in their vocabularies. They laugh at the riddle form with which they are familiar even though they do not understand the riddle. What McGhee fails to mention is the great diversity between simple and complex riddles that depend upon the language capabilities of the child. It is not merely the onset of concrete operational thinking that is the magical formula for the comprehension of abstract verbal humor, but the acquisition of language itself. This is a subject I shall return to in my chapter concerning language and humor.

3. Fantasy as Play

There has been some concern about the stress placed on the acquisition of cognitive skills as paramount in the development of

play. Other researchers have centered on the affective suggesting that fantasy and the development of imaginative play are equally important in the child's overall development. Some have directly related imaginative play to the appreciation of verbal humor. Although this area has had little attention, it is one worth mentioning and thinking about. In addition, there is strong evidence that literature and the arts are play areas and a continuation of early imaginative play.

Huizinga (1949) views play as free and voluntary. His argument is that children play because they enjoy it, but it is not the real world; it is a secondary world of play, and the child knows that is is not reality. Although play is technically outside the sphere of the real world and is not necessary to satisfy the ordinary needs of life, it is necessary as an adornment and amplification of life and serves both a social and cultural need. Because play is limited in its locality and duration, it is separate from ordinary life. But it can be repeated and is retained in memory and so becomes part of the culture, a tradition. Play creates order and it is here that it relates to aesthetics; the order creates beauty. Both poetry and dreams fall within the play area and can be illustrated by the Greeks whose comedies grew out of the feast of Dionysus, a ritual which relates to play.

Vygotsky (1962), points out the danger of referring to play as purely cognitive as Piaget does. Stressing the importance of the affective, he suggests that play arises from unrealized desires. Spontaneous make-believe highlights those features of the child's

world that are most salient at a given time. Discussing the influence of play in the development of the child, Vygotsky proposes that the very young child can only relate meaning to the objects he sees. There is no divergence possible between visual perception and meaning. Beyond the age of three, imaginative play becomes the first freedom from the constraints of the visual perception. Objects are identified not only by words relating to physical characteristics but with meaning as well. Play, then, acts as a transition between the pure situational constraints of early childhood and reality-free thought. When the child reaches school age, the internal process, complete with internal speech and logical and abstract thoughts, supplants the imaginative play.

Vygotsky believes that pretend play is related to actual games with rules. Each make-believe situation contains inherent rules stemming from the imaginary setting itself (ex.-playing mother to a doll). Imaginative play develops into the purposeful play of games with set rules. Reality pervades play as it continues in athletic contests and actual academic competition. Pleasure results when the outcome of these activities is successful.

D. W. Winnicott (1971) came to believe that, while focusing on inner and personal reality as well as external or shared reality, psychoanalysts were neglecting individual development and experience. He refers to an intermediate phase of experiencing effected by both inner reality and external life yet separated from both - an area of free play: a 'third area' of experience. There is a personal pattern of development in each child involving his

first possessions which Winnicott call 'transitional phenomena.' This may be a piece of wool, a blanket, or a special word or song that the infant needs for sleeping or as an anxiety defense. Often an object such as a soft animal is used and is referred to by Winnicott as a 'transitional object.' Patterns set in infancy often continue into childhood so that the object may continue to be a part of the bedtime ritual. Throughout life this intermediate area is retained by the cultural experiences of the arts, religion, and the creative sciences. The cultural experience (or play) of this third area varies according to the experiences of the individual in his environment. Perhaps it is here, in the third area, that the elusive sense of humor is born, because the constraints of both inner and outer necessity are removed.

James Britton (1977), in looking at images of fantasy as play, adds 'reflective behavior' to the adaptive behavior introduced by Piaget. He describes it as

...storing the outcomes of experiences
and of other people's experiences with
scant regard for their immediate
adaptive behavior.

Britton basically agrees that the cognitive mode of organization is responsible for images becoming ideas and the process is carried out through language. He raises the question, however, of the existence of yet another kind of mental organization, different from the cognitive, that might be responsible for feeling and fantasy: an area of 'play.' Play is clarified as a 'voluntary activity' that exists merely for its own sake. This kind of play reflects the real

world but it is basically unconcerned with the authenticity of the images generated. Britton has drawn a distinction between play and the adaptive activities of the real world. Play frees us to be ourselves. Britton introduces the idea of literature as art practiced within this area of play. To accept his views places daydreams, make-believe play, storytelling, and books of fantasy in this play area. Further, these activities are assimilative in function. Accepting these activities as play enables us to reflect upon what Britton calls an 'inner necessity'; the transition of purposeless daydreaming into the fulfilling of an inner need. This is drawn from Winnicott's 'third area'; the world of freedom that exists between the actual world and the 'inner necessity.' The world of literature and the arts enable the child to assimilate his inner needs with external societal demands.

Tower and Singer (1980) discuss the role of fantasy and imagination in children's humor and suggest that imaginative play leads to the development of verbal humor. Seeing humor as only one form of imaginative play allows the various cognitive, social, and affective outcomes of make-believe to apply to humor as well. Cognitive benefits of imagery in play include attention span, distinguishing between environmental and self-created information, organization of information (Piaget's assimilation), rehearsal and retention of information, reflectivity, correction and elaboration of faulty cognitions, planning and integrating imaginative experiences. In addition, the authors suggest that imaginative play facilitates language development. Imagery is a means of obtaining

information which later may be labeled; 'dog' means 'my collie' which later extends to include a more generalized concept. Verbal skills are enhanced by the opportunity to try out new combinations in a non-threatening atmosphere. (Children sing to their toys before they sing with the family). Children who engage in social imaginative play have larger vocabularies and use more complex sentence structure.

The social benefits of imaginative play improve a child's sensitivity to others, increases empathy, provides common avenues for interaction with peers and parents, provides self-entertainment, and provides an introduction to the myths and traditions of the culture, and also is what, in any given culture, is accepted as common sense.

Affective functions of imaginative play include improved emotional well-being, increased spontaneity, increased sense of mastery, increased positive affect (happy children), and reduced fear and anxiety. The latter two conflict with the psychoanalytic views of Freud who, in his writings, viewed humor as a means of releasing aggressions in a socially acceptable manner, and Wolfenstein, who stressed the role of humor in aiding children to overcome anxiety. This association of humor and happiness opposes the psychoanalytic view that regards humor as motivated by some distress. Tower and Singer propose an emphasis of the positive emotions of joy and excitement related to imaginative play and linked to humor.

By suggesting that the cognitive-affective approach that they

attribute to imaginative play also can be linked to humor, the writers propose that humor in its verbal or gentler non-verbal forms evolves from make-believe. Children learn to signal the beginning of 'pretend' sequences and similarly learn to give or interpret the signals indicating that a humorous story or event is imminent. The signal is crucial for it avoids the possibility of negative effect from the humorous stimulus. Thus, humor appears when a new or absurd event becomes manageable and is matched to an earlier schemata, or formed into a new one, so reducing the novelty.

D. Humor in Childhood

1. Incongruity: Contemporary Research

Incongruities are considered to be both the earliest and simplest form of humor experienced by children. Max Eastman (1921), placing the incongruent at the core of his hypothesis, asserts that the simple act of making a funny face, or offering a toy and unexpectedly snatching it away, will arouse laughter in a baby. McGhee (1971, 77) and Shultz (1976) both propose that humor based on incongruity is one of the earliest forms of humor in young children and that the appreciation of such humor depends upon the development of the child's capacity for symbolic play (Piaget, 1962). Stroufe and Waters (1976) report that younger infants smiled and laughed at incongruent events while older infants smiled and laughed at their own production of the discrepant event (ex. pushing a dangling cloth into mother's mouth after mother had removed it). Contemporary researchers citing the mismatch as the earliest form of humor

experienced by children base their findings on Piaget's principles of intellectual development (Shultz, 1976; McGhee, 1977; Athey, 1977). They advance the hypothesis that cognitive development is intrinsic in distinguishing what constitutes a 'match' or mismatch. Learning has been studied through watching children play and it is through play that the first vestiges of humor appear.

Modern researchers have taken up the question of 'bewilderment and illumination' in order to explain the failure of young children to find certain jokes and riddles funny. Abandoning Lipps' term, they refer to incongruities as resolved or unresolved. Since children's appreciation of verbal joking is directly related to their acquisition of language, as we shall see in a later section, illumination or resolution does not always follow the bewilderment of unresolved joking in children.

Shultz (1972) divides incongruity into two distinct stages: unresolved and resolved. Children up to the age of seven or eight appreciate an unexpected event (incongruity) and find it humorous. It is funny because it makes no sense not because it makes sense in an unexpected way. The following example was used by Shultz:

Why did the farmer name his hog Ink?
Because he kept running out of the pen.
(original answer)
Because he kept running away. (resolution
removed answer)

Children under the age of seven or eight should find the second answer as funny as the first because the incongruity is a pig called

'Ink.' An older child should conceivably make the connection to a fountain pen and thus resolve the incongruity. This arrival at a meaningful solution is necessary before a humorous reaction occurs in the older child.

Shultz (1974) tested his theory by presenting jokes and riddles to two different groups of children: one group with the resolution of verbal jokes removed and one group with the resolution retained.

Unresolved: "Why did the cookie cry?"
"Because its mother was a wafer."

Resolved: "Why did the cookie cry?"
"Because its mother had been a wafer so long."

Six year old children did not give the resolved versions of the riddles any higher ratings than the unresolved. However eight year olds rated the resolved riddles as funnier.

Shultz (1972, 1974) found comparable results with jokes and cartoons. There has been some challenging of this theory by McGhee (1976) who suggests that because of linguistic ambiguity first graders were unable to differentiate between joking and nonjoking versions of riddles. This inability to understand verbal forms of humor accounts for the failure of children under the age of 7 to appreciate resolved incongruities.

Pien and Rothbart (1977) carried the question of resolved and unresolved incongruities further by experimenting with a group of four and five year olds. In using 'knock, knock' jokes, they discovered that even though the linguistic ambiguities were simple,

the question and answer format was bewildering and unknown to the children. In other simple jokes, ('What has one horn and gives milk?' 'A milk truck.'), they found that many children had forgotten the beginning of the joke by the time the answer was given. In order to eliminate the memory and vocabulary problems, the experimenters developed a series of sequential cartoons, involving incongruity, that appeared to be appreciated by four and five year olds. The researchers listed another area of difficulty in measuring humor appreciation in children: the validity of the five-point rating scale in the hands of 4 and 5 year olds. And further, the Shultz model of statistically comparing the responses of two groups of children to different forms of material was questioned because of the wide individual differences found in reactions to humor. To compensate for these differences, the experimenters created a 'paired-comparison' method by which each subject was asked to compare the two different forms of incongruity (resolved and unresolved). Children 4 and 5 years of age were presented with sequential cartoons and asked to select the beginning or ending frame that made the sequence funnier. Results showed that the children preferred the resolved to the unresolved versions significantly more often.

Although these kinds of studies add credence to my argument citing incongruity as the earliest and primary basis for humor, the research ignores the real source of children's learning and development of a sense of humor: play. While the child plays, he practices what he observes in the world around him and can try out

different actions that further his development. These actions include the 'fun' of performing the incongruous: putting his shoes on the wrong feet or putting his coat on backwards. The child reenforces his knowledge of reality through the use of make-believe and thereby acquires a heightened awareness of the incongruous.

2. Play and the Incongruous

Sutton-Smith (1974) notes that while playing with a baby of three or four months of age, a laugh can be achieved by presenting some form of incongruity or puzzle. Changing direction suddenly, rubbing his stomach with your head, making nonsense sounds are all designed to create laughter. Creating the unexpected by throwing things or falling over, so long as they are accompanied by smiles, should produce a laugh.

McGhee (1979) views play as crucial to the humor of incongruous events. The child in a playful frame of mind finds these events funny because they are at odds with reality. This sense of unreality ('fantasy assimilation') is perceived as a prerequisite for the appreciation of incongruous humor.

Humor in the young child, then, results from the playful contemplation of incongruity, exaggeration, absurdity, or nonsense only when the child realizes that the events exist in fantasy.

McGhee mentions two categories of play: social play and play with objects. He sees incongruous relationships possible in either form of play, but it is in play with objects that cognitive processes are

more clearly seen. It is only after becoming familiar with an incongruous object that a playful mood sets in. Up until that time the exploration of the object places the child in a serious and learning mood. Humor develops as a child's playfulness reaches back to newly mastered ideas and images as well as play with objects. It would be necessary to imagine that object performing an act that is absurd or impossible for humor to be aroused.

Our psychological studies end with play as fantasy, a natural introduction to the language and lore of children. Where has the psychology taken us? The renewed interest in humor reflects the basic developmental trends of the cognitive, social, and emotional development of man. Studies of cognitive and social aspects of humor have been extended to children and made us aware of the many factors involved in the humor experience. Modified behaviorists (McGhee) still employ experimental methods but stress the importance of cognitive and social aspects of humor. The psychoanalytic proponents of humor, while stressing how the unconscious effects our willingness to be amused, have contributed to our increased understanding of the development of verbal humor. Play is a natural place to experiment with humor since the child may be adventurous and still be secure. The cognitive, affective, and social strains of humor all meet in play. Incongruity has been identified as the earliest aspect of humor identifiable in children and has been related to the stages of intellectual development proposed by Piaget. Social psychologists have suggested that it is the sharing of the social situation and the early enculturation of the child

that facilitates the child's laughter. Psychoanalytic interpretations have stressed the emotional release gained through humor. The child releases fears through humor. The child releases fears through joking and captures the temporary autonomy he longs to possess. I suggest that all of these proposals contribute to the development of humor in the child and correspond with my own view of the psychology of humor. The cognitive aspect includes humor as developmental progressing from the simple recognition of the unresolved incongruity as the earliest form of humor to the place where children logically think and are metalinguistically aware and so able to resolve verbal incongruities. The affective processes cannot be ignored in the explanation of humor. One only needs to see how the same joke elicits three levels of response from three different listeners to know that some emotional forces are involved. The social aspect of humor is twofold: first, once the ordinary is socially learned, the incongruous becomes humorous. Second, learning the 'frame,' the acceptable convention known to others, is the key to the response to unresolved verbal humor. The young child will respond to the sort of frame that is prevalent in his peer group even though he does not 'get the joke.' As I will suggest in my chapter on humorous literature for children, it is also the 'frame' of 'story' to which children respond. Play, as the area in which reality and fantasy intermingle and the child is free to experiment to break the frame, is the place where a 'sense of humor' is developed and nurtured. Verbal play, both in joke telling and story reading, is part of the child's unframed fantasy world.

He brings to this play world the combination of his past experience and his anticipation of the future based upon his understanding of the everyday world and he can, therefore, create a new, even incongruous world, in his head.

Certain common threads have converged throughout our studies. Humor as the result of the mismatched pairings of ideas or situations, the humor of incongruity first noticed by Aristotle and postulated by Kant and Schopenhauer, has been a major theme of psychological tenets. The aspect of society, and social and cultural awareness present in all of the writings of the philosophers has been expanded by the sociologists and social psychologists who point to the culture and institutions and the group, respectively, as major influences on the individual's response to humor. The present state of psychological awareness has left us with the view of humor as a balancing emotion. Life's tragedies are made bearable by the pleasure of humorous exchange. I keep returning to Aristotle's 'Golden Mean' and the realization that moderation, the path between the extremes of life, is achieved with a 'sense of humor.' Children are inherently fun-loving individuals, happiest with play and playfulness. The psychological explanations of their humor leads us to language and its development and the emergence of verbal humor, the forerunner to the appreciation of literary humor.

V. Language and Humor

Looking back at the last three chapters, I have suggested that a sense of the incongruous is a basic condition for the appreciation of humor. This premise is supported by the writings, of philosophers and the ongoing research conducted by psychologists. Next, I offered the view that humor is socially learned by the child, first through interaction with adults, and later through interaction with peers. Implicit in this process of 'getting the joke' is an understanding of the cultural conventions, making the reversal of these known conventions incongruous, and therefore funny. This cultural and social awareness and the influence of the groups and institutions of society on the individual has been investigated and supported by sociologists and social-psychologists. Freud and his followers offer the view that unconscious psychological forces are responsible for an appreciation of jokes and joking, what I view as psychological motivation for the recognition of an incongruity. Since virtually all psychological research investigating humor depends upon some form of verbal joking, it becomes clear that the acquisition and development of language skills is closely related to the development of a sense of humor. We take joking, like other things that make life tolerable, so much for granted that how we learn to play the various kinds of verbal games we enjoy is something we rarely think about. Philosophers, sociologists, and psychologists deal with a sense of humor when it is fully developed. They rarely inquire how it comes to be as it is. Joking is a kind of language play, indulged in by

both adults and children, which depends upon a metalinguistic awareness: the ability to manipulate linguistic conventions. This chapter deals with the acquisition and development of metalinguistic awareness and seeks to maintain that humor depends upon both cognitive appreciation of the incongruous, an unconscious psychological process unknown to the joker or his audience, and is a socially learned process. We know that humor is a social sharing of experience that is possible because the uniformity and continuity of the objects (or subjects) of humor are shared by most people at a given time. Humor may be society's censor against the socially unacceptable, a revolt against the institutions of society, or an adult linguistic game that extends an alternate construction of the world.

Jokes have both form and cultural content which children learn through engaging in conversation. Non-verbal communication serves as the basis for rules of conversation set long before the child is able to converse. Early parent/child interactions are responsible for a shared knowledge that may also be the basis of later conversational skills. The young child learns to use non-verbal techniques such as gestures and eye direction to focus attention on a given object and in turn learns to interpret those signals from adults. The child also learns to respond when necessary and to understand what specific response is expected. Later, the child listens to and interprets speech sounds before he understands that the sounds have meaning. Intonation and rhythm both signal change to which the infant attends. Conversation is preceded by games

('this little piggy') in which two people participate in a common activity while playing different roles. At first the child is the observer while the parent is the active participant in the game. Later, when the child has learned the game, the roles may be reversed. As the child matures during the pre-school period, he masters new vocabulary and eventually grammatical rules. The child makes unwitting jokes by confusing the forms of language before he fully understands the rules.

This is my 'bestest' dress.

Multisyllabic words often cause the child to confuse sounds and syllables. My oldest son kept us constantly amused with the 'nakmin' he used to wipe his mouth and the 'pizzghetti' he loved with tomato sauce. His daughter continues the fun by talking about the 'ormanents' on the Christmas tree. Speech requires the internalization of certain rules of language that enable man to make meaning. Humor reverses and twists language patterns, or adds to them, thus creating incongruities of meaning or structure by lifting language out of its context and ignoring contextual meaning. There are two main ways of generating comic speech. One is when the syntax stays solid but the semantics are fractured.

Why did the little moron cut a hole in the rug?
He wanted to see the floorshow.

The second way of generating comic speech is when the semantics are correct and the syntax is strange.

I don't mind eels
Except as meals.
And the way they feels. (Ogden Nash)

The first depends on the visual to make the punchline clear. If it

is merely an auditory joke, it is possible to interpret floorshow as two words: floor and show. In that case, the humor is lost since it is evident that the floor is under the rug. The joke lies in the noun floorshow which has to be seen to be understood. The visual semantic confusion provided the humor. Nash's syntactically incorrect poem depends on sound and has been manipulated in order to create a rhyme. Hearing it, not seeing it, creates the joke. It must be noted that humor counts on a shared metalinguistic awareness in adults. The development of that awareness is discussed later in this chapter.

A. Joke Forms

1. Puns

Puns are old forms of word play found as early as Shakespeare. Two meanings appear in one word or in two words of indentical sound.

With nimble soles, I have a soul of lead
I am too sore..... to soar (Romeo and Juliet,
I, 4)

This kind of word play was considered witty by the Elizabethans but is now low on the scale of witticisms with modern adults. Children, however, delight in puns.

The Opies (1959) quote the follow bit of juvenile wit.

There was a man in a house and he could not get out. The only furniture was a table. He rubbed his hands until they were sore. Then he sawed the table in half. Two halves make a whole. He shouted through the hole until he was hoarse, jumped on the horse and rode away. (p.49)

2. Riddles

This form of joke is extremely popular with children who adopted

it much later than adults. The Opies note that in the past, the riddle was popular with adults who collected them. Harriet's 'only literary pursuit' in Emma was to gather riddles. Printed riddle books have been popular with adults for more than four hundred years and some riddles told by children today can be found in a collection dating from the Middle Ages: Demaundes Joyous, Wynkyn de Worde, London, 1511 (Opies). How deep is the ocean? A stone's throw, appeared in 1511 as : Why space is from y^e hiest space of the se to the depestBut a stones cast.

a. True Riddles

The true riddle describes something in an intentionally obscure style yet has a solution that fits the elements of the description, resolving a paradox.

What gets wet when drying? A towel.

This type of riddle is also found in early riddle collections (A Book of Merrie Riddles, 1631). The Opies list both the early form and the modern counterpart of a popular true riddle.

What doth with his roote upwards grow, and
downward with his head doth show? It is an
icesickle.

What grows in winter, dies in summer, and grows
with its roots upwards? An icicle.

b. Rhyming Riddles

The rhyming riddle is almost always a true riddle and is often the child's first introduction to poetry. This type of riddle describes an object in highly imaginative and often abstract terms.

A Thimble
It is a little house
It has a hundred windows
Yet it won't hold a mouse. (Opies, p.97)

Perhaps the most famous example of a rhyming riddle is 'Humpty Dumpty.' Like other riddle forms, the Opies also date the rhyming riddle at least as far back as the fifteenth century.

c. Punning Riddles

While puns play on the multiple meanings or sounds of words, punning riddles are word-pictures with two interpretations.

What runs but never walks? A river.
What has teeth but cannot bite? A comb. (Opies,
p.98)

This type of riddle attributes human-like animation to inanimate objects and is also a kind of true riddle since the answers are accurate.

d. Conundrums

Conundrums are riddles in which a fanciful question is answered by a pun. The Opies note that 'for more than a hundred years children have likened a spectator to a bee-hive because he is a beholder (bee holder).' Often the solution to the question is a double pun.

What is the difference between a warder and a
jeweler?
One watches cells and the other sells watches.

This particular conundrum plays upon the double meaning of watches and the homophonic characteristic of cell/sell. The earliest kind of conundrum, and the most widely known, involves only a single pun.

When is a door not a door? When it is
ajar.

These are favorites of children who find them easy to remember. An ingenious form of the conundrum uses a noun as a verb playing on semantic confusion and giving live characteristics to inanimate objects.

Why did the hen run? Because it saw the tree
bark.
Why did the coal scuttle? Because it saw the
kitchen sink. (Opies, p.100)

e. Wellerisms

This type of word play asks seemingly straightforward questions and answers them with puns that play on the characteristics of the objects in question with semantic confusion.

What did the big rose say to the little rose?
Hiya bud. (Opies, p. 102).

The semantic confusion lies in the use of bud which may mean both an unopened rose and a familiar salutation.

3. Parody

Parody takes well-known songs, poems, and nursery rhymes and mimics their style while often making fun of some of society's 'sacred cows.'

We three kings of Orient are,
One in a taxi, one in a car,
One in a scooter blowing his hooter
Following yonder star. (Opies, p.108)

As I will discuss later in this thesis, parody in literature, as satire, plays upon any weakness in structure and meaning of the original.

4. Limericks

A limerick is a light humorous or nonsensical verse of five anapestic lines usually with the rhyme scheme aabba. This form was popularized by Edward Lear in his Book of Nonsense (1846). The first line of most limericks ends with a place name following the example set by Lear. The last line in most of Lear's limericks repeats the place name, but modern limericks end with a rhyming word instead of a repetition.

There was an Old Man of Berlin,
Whose form was uncommonly thin;
Till he once, by mistake,
Was mixed up in a cake,
So they baked that Old Man of Berlin. (Lear)

There was an old woman from Kent
Whose nose was remarkable bent
One day they suppose
She followed her nose
And nobody knows where she went (McCosh,
p. 163)

The limerick, as part of children's traditional humorous literature, will be discussed in a subsequent chapter.

5. Clerihews

The clerihew is a form of verse invented by Edmund Clerihew Bentley and consists of two couplets that humorously characterize a person whose name is one of the rhymes.

Sir Humphry Davy
Detested gravy.
He lived in the odium
Of having discovered Sodium.

Ogden Nash substitutes animals for people creating comic linguistic gems.

The Canary
The song of canaries
Never varies,
And when they're molting
They're pretty revolting. (Nash, 1981)

6. Fractured Proverbs

This type of verbal joke uses syntactic scrambling, homonyms, or a change in grammatical categories to create humor. It is only funny when the actual proverb is known, depending on shared literary values.

'Time wounds all heels.'

7. Narratives

Narrative jokes are told by children and adults and emphasize humorous content rather than form. The content may be social, including political or religious topics, cultural, including ethnic or sexual jokes. While jokes depending on language play involve some incongruity in semantics or syntax, jokes depending on content include incongruity of ideas as well. The linguistic play of narrative and other jokes depending on content become attached to specialized content areas. These will be discussed in the next section.

B. Joke Content

1. Social Content: Jokes made at the expense of some group or institution of society.

a. Doctors and the Medical Profession

Doctors deal in the prevention and cure of disease, areas that

are unsettling to the ordinary man and hence threatening. We depend upon doctors and so are often in awe of them as well. When man feels threatened and insecure he jokes, turning uneasiness into humor.

A man was lying in a hospital after a road accident.
A doctor came up to him and said, "I have some good news and some bad news for you. The bad news is that we've cut both your legs off. The good news is that the chap in the next bed wants to buy your slippers.

(Blundell, 1982)

b. Restaurants

In modern society restaurants and their employees are the butt of jokes about poor food and service. Like other public service institutions, they are bound to displease many who turn their discontent into joking .

Waiter: 'How did you find your steak sir?'

Diner: 'I lifted up a mushroom and there it was.'

(Blundell, p.40)

c. Sports

Professional sports, a national preoccupation in some cultures, give rise to fluctuating emotions. When the favorite players and teams are winning, the fans are happy. When the teams are losing, anger and frustration gives way to derogatory joking.

Football Manager: 'Why do you call our goalkeeper Cinderella?'

Player: 'Because he's always missing the ball.'

(Blundell, p.82)

This particular joke depends on the listener knowing the tale of Cinderella, and points up the shared cultural experience taken for granted. The incongruity lies not only in associating Cinderella with a football goalkeeper, but also in the dual meaning of 'missing the ball.'

d. Religion: the Bible

When organized religion and its rituals were part of the framework of cultural beliefs, joking about it had no chance of being funny, merely blasphemous. When shared values began to change, what had been taken seriously could be mocked. The following joke indicates that what once was serious no longer is.

Jesus walked into the square one day and came upon a crowd that was about to stone a woman. When Jesus asked what she had done, the crowd responded that she had committed adultery. Jesus stood on a large rock and told the crowd, "Let those among you who have never sinned cast the first stone." After a period of time a little old lady emerged from the crowd picked up a good sized stone and hurled it at the adultress. Jesus turned and eyed the woman. With a disgusted look, he said, "Mom, sometimes you are a pain in the ass." (Haan & Hammerstrom 1981, p. 80)

The incongruity lies on several levels. The most obvious is the punchline attributed to Jesus. The second, at a deeper level, is the identification of the little old lady as Mary. The third, and deepest level, is the entire framework of the joke mimicking a Biblical story. The listener must know the story of Jesus and Mary and the Biblical reference to get the humor. Given that set of circumstances, the punchline with its distinctly non-Biblical phrasing is even funnier.

e. Politics

Humor performs a leveling function against our leaders, especially political and religious, and shows man's continuing resentment of established authority.

Jerry Ford thinks Veto Powers is an Italian spy pilot.
(anonymous)

Playing on the general feeling that President Ford was less than brilliant, this joke has several layers of political humor. The most obvious is Ford's dullness in confusing a presidential power with a person and the word play with Veto/Vito. The deeper humor is in the use of the name Powers, who was an American spy pilot and the object of wide unfavorable publicity.

f. Law and the Legal Profession

Humorous offerings include criticism of institutions, rebellion against authority, and class or economic distinctions.

Old lawyers never die, they just lose their
appeal. (anonymous)

One of a host of lawyer jokes, this one plays on two aspects of meaning. The first is a parody of the 'old soldier' saying of General MacArthur that has become an American joke. (Old soldiers never die, they just fade away.) The second is the play on the meaning of 'appeal' making the listener aware of dual meanings; appeal as being attractive, and appeal as an application for review of a case to a higher tribunal. The incongruity lies in the semantic confusion.

2. Cultural Content

This body of humor represents jokes that are peculiar to

specific cultures identified by their content. This is different from social jokes whose content may be found in most Western societies.

a. Ethnic Jokes

Ethnic jokes rely on cultural suppositions. Sometimes these are simple put-downs (certain groups are seen as stupid or dirty), and more often they are more complex.

A white woman is exiting from a passenger train while a negro porter watches from the platform below. She slips! The porter starts to catch her, then suddenly changes his mind, letting her fall.
(La Fave, 1977)

Usually the victim of prejudice the porter turns the tables on the white woman. The humor lies in the incongruity of the white woman being the butt of the joke and the disadvantaged minority experiencing a vicarious superiority. The ethnic humor is employed by the usually powerless member of society.

Other ethnic jokes have the same content but a different cast of characters. Polish jokes in the United States become Irish jokes in England.

Why did the Polack run his car off the cliff?
Because he wanted to try out his new air brakes.
(McCosh, p.232)

Why did Irishman drive a 2-ton truck over edge of cliff?
To test his air brakes. (McCosh, p.227).

These are traditional ethnic jokes where the ethnic minority is 'put down' by the majority.

b. Sexual Jokes

Jokes alluding to sex, according to Freud and his followers, have their roots in suppressed sexual feelings. Whether we accept that view, or the view that people simply tell jokes about sex because they have traditionally been taboo, this kind of joke has wide popularity across all Western cultures both with adults and children.

A little boy goes with his French nanny to the zoo
and sees the elephant having an enormous erection.
'What's that?' asks the little boy. The nanny is
very embarrassed and replies, 'Nothing.' A
cockney standing by remarks: 'Ain't she spoilt?'

(Mikes, 1980, p.83)

All of the content in jokes depends upon a linguistic incongruity, semantic or syntactic, and often an incongruity of ideas as well. Growth in linguistic humor depends upon an awareness of language as a plaything, a growing social awareness of joking occasions and joke suitability, and the teller's confidence in his own language ability to carry it off. There is a growth of 'layering' in joking, the ability to skillfully tell jokes with multi-humorous levels, helped along by the social approval that comes from being a good teller. The ultimate in joke-telling is achieved by the 'stand-up' comic, that American phenomenon who can rattle off one-liners in his sleep. I shall return to him in my discussion of the clown.

By now, the complexity of the form and content of linguistic humor is apparent. The ability to comprehend and eventually tell jokes depends on an experience of form and an experience of content. It appears that rhyming is the earliest form of joking that appeals to children. Wolfenstein refers to the 'rhyming

insult' which children know as early as five years of age.

Baby, Baby! Stick your head in the gravy! (p.182)

It is rhyme itself, the form, that children find funny. Children appear to acquire a collection of joking riddles in the form of question and answer around the age of six or seven.

Why did the boy take a ruler to bed with him ?
So he could see how long he slept. (Wolfenstein,
p.122).

It is questionable just how many of these joking riddles six or seven year olds understand. My own group of children knew many of this type of joke, but when I questioned them about the 'funniness' of the joke, their answers indicated a lack of understanding. When asked to retell the joke, they told it incorrectly. It is my view that children below the age of eight or nine know the linguistic 'frame' of the riddle or pun but do not understand the linguistic incongruity. The same would hold true for conundrums, Wellerisms, comic songs, and poetic parodies. Parodies are known to children but it is not really possible to tell how familiar they are with the parodied piece. Although we can assume that five and six year olds know and can recite 'Mary had a little lamb' and therefore recognize its parodies, I doubt that many that age know 'The boy stood on the burning deck,' the subject of multiple parodies (Opies, p.133). Limericks and clerihews are really literary pieces and while children may be exposed to them, they are not forms that are included in their oral joking. Once we pass beyond the simple rhyming riddle, the true riddle, or pun, the

humor depends upon a more complex ambiguity of meaning (punning riddles, conundrums, Wellerisms). We must then assume that only the older child (11 or 12) can really understand the humor in these more complex forms. Wolfenstein used the following joke to note the difference between joking and non-joking responses:

Why did the moron take the ladder to school?
Because he wanted to get into a higher grade.

Six year old response: Because he wanted to climb the ladder.

Eight year old response: It has something to do with schoolwork.

Nine year old response: To climb the monkey bars, maybe...

Twelve year old response: Maybe to get up in the world. To climb to success.

Thirteen year old response: To be ahead...a head taller than everyone.

It appears that it is not until early adolescence that children recognize that it is not the 'frame' of the joke that is funny, but the joking response itself. Young children are not quite sure how to interpret certain jokes; they have not yet learned the rules of joking. Neither fractured proverbs nor narrative jokes are told by young children. The former is a very advanced kind of joking that depends upon a shared knowledge of the proverb being fractured and the latter is too difficult for the young child to remember. Attempts made at narrative jokes result in long, rambling unfunny stories.

As his understanding and vocabulary build and grow, so will his jokes change from short quick riddles and puns popular with the younger children, to complex jokes and anecdotes.
(McCosh, p. 52)

We may assume that children who tell these content-dependent jokes

before early adolescence have learned them from parents, older siblings, or through TV or joke books.

Why have I spent so much time on joking and linguistic humor?

The reason is that an appreciation of literary humor depends upon an understanding of oral linguistic humor, first as the 'told', and later as the 'teller', both experiences beginning in early childhood. I assume that the various joke structures have to be socially learned and that a degree of metalinguistic awareness is necessary for the appreciation of the language humor in jokes. I also assume that experience and education (both secular and religious) will permit comprehension of all of the content presented. How, then, do these language abilities develop in children? On one hand, as I have previously suggested, they are socially learned. On the other, it is the development of language functions, how the child learns the use of language, with the developing and diversified metalinguistic awareness that enables the child to understand and create verbal humor. I am going back to the early stages of language development to investigate when the child notices the discrepancies in language and begins to use language as a plaything.

C. Metalinguistic Awareness and its Development in Children

Metalinguistic awareness, the ability to think and comment about language, as well as to produce and develop it, begins with the child's awareness of normal language patterns and language discrepancies. The awareness of linguistic patterns necessary for

puns and other forms of verbal play has been investigated by Gleitman, Gleitman, and Shipley(1972), and de Villiers and de Villiers (1974). Children of two or three will often comment of clearly ungrammatical sentences and judge them as 'silly' (Gleitman et al). Their corrections, however, generally change the implicit meaning as well as the word order (the box open became Get in the box), suggesting that the response was to the semantic confusion rather than word order. De Villiers and de Villiers, also investigating the ability to judge correct word order (ages 2.5 - 4.5), discovered that semantic anomaly is easier for children to judge and correct than syntactic anomaly. The children in the study were told they were helping to teach a puppet to speak properly.

The puppet produced some correct imperatives (Pat the dog), reversed imperatives (Cake the eat), and semantically anomalous imperatives (Drink the chair). Children were asked to judge the sentences as 'right ' or 'wrong' and to correct the 'wrong' version. From ages 2.5 - 3.0, children were unable to judge reversed word order as wrong. From 3.0 - 3.5, the semantic anomaly (Drink the chair) was judged wrong but not corrected. From 4.0 - 4.5, there were accurate judgements of both anomaly and reversed order. Results of both of these investigations indicate that a child may correctly use linguistic rules in producing sentences long before he can analyze them. These early indications would point to the fact that although young children have semantic awareness and use it in language production, grammatical and syntactical awareness develop at a later time. In order to trace the later development of metalinguistic

abilities, we shall investigate the verbal play of the young child and its place in the development of language, language as a social process, language and meaning, and playing with language including the comprehension of the verbal incongruity.

1. Language as Social Interaction

The continuing research with language development in the last twenty-five years authorizes its social nature. I shall look at the work of several researchers and note that their conclusions point to language as a social interactive process. Despite Piaget's insights into the early egocentric aspects of the development of cognition in children, most researchers now agree that language, like most other essential symbolic systems, is socially learned.

M.A.K. Halliday(1975) suggests that a small child's early language is a 'sociosemiotic' process. He interprets 'sociosemiotic' as a 'synthesis of three modes of interpretation: language in the context of the social system, language as an aspect of a more general semiotic, and the social system itself as a semiotic system.' Viewed this way, the social system is a system of meaning relations realized in many ways but principally through encoding for the transmission of the system. At the same time as the child learns his language, he 'learns how to mean' and constructs his own social semiotic. Language is the expression of the social semiotic and in the process of transmitting it language is shaped and reshaped as the child internalizes his culture. Language begins when the child communicates systematically and

functionally, that is when there is sound-meaning correspondence. The early language of children (proto-language) is not adult language as we know it, but the child's invention (bow wow, ding ding). The word may imitate the word used by adults but it does not represent the word itself. Halliday attributes six functions to the child's proto-language which are outside of and evolve and exist independently of language: initially, instrumental (I want), regulatory (do as I tell you), interactional (me and you), and personal (here I come), followed later by heuristic (tell me why) and imaginative (let's pretend). The child masters these basic functions of language in his earliest language stage and then enters into a transitional stage of language that will carry him into an adult linguistic system. This transitional stage is characterized by a shift in function and an advance in vocabulary, structure, and dialogue. The child moves from a preoccupation with monologue to dialogue, principally the question and answer. The functions of stage two appear to be 'pragmatic,' corresponding to the instrumental and regulatory functions of the proto-language, and 'mathetic,' derived from the personal and heuristic functions of that early language. The mathetic function has as its purpose learning and is identified as language in the identification of self and the exploration of non-self. It is through observation and experience that this function is realized and in so doing enhances and expands the child's vocabulary. The pragmatic function combines the satisfaction of personal needs and control of and interaction with others.

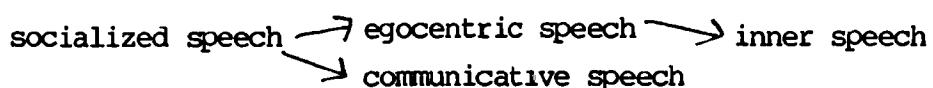
What Halliday has given us is a view of the child learning the culture while he learns the language. The meaning potentials that the child expresses in the primary language phase serve him in functions that exist not only in language, but in human life and culture. If we adopt Halliday's perspective, we see the child as an active agent in deriving meaning for himself from the world around him, and language then becomes a part of life. Both Vygotsky (1962) and Halliday emphasize the social aspect of the child's language acquisition and it seems clear that it is through the process of learning the language that the child learns his culture. His meanings in the 'context of situation' are directly related to meanings in the 'context of culture.' Analogous to learning language through conversation is learning through the oral tradition of nursery rhymes, riddles, jokes, and stories. The Opies have shown that these forms are transmitted from adult to child and from child to child in an interactive, social manner.

Modern researchers believe that contextual support is crucial to language acquisition. Wells (1979) points to the complexity of the situation in which the child acquires language and identifies four variable attributes contributing to the child's linguistic behavior. Only one of the variables relates inherently to the child and includes sex, intelligence, and personality. The remaining three are environmental and include social factors (family, group, culture), physical situation, and style of interaction (interpersonal relationships). All of these factors must be considered when describing the context of language acquisition.

Acknowledging the social context of language acquisition, researchers have focused on the characteristics of caretaker's conversation with children (Fraser and Roberts, 1973, 1975; Snow and Ferguson, 1977; Cross, 1977) seeking to identify universal characteristics of linguistic utterings to the child. Wells identifies three groups of conversational contexts: Mothering (bathing, feeding), Independent (child alone or with other children), and Joint Enterprise (shared activity with an adult). A significant relationship was found between the rate of development at 2-1/2 years of age and amount of speech to the child in the context of Joint Enterprise. The Wells findings indicate the importance of conversation jointly constructed by parent and child and suggest that differences in the quality of the child's conversational experiences are related to the rate of language development.

While this late work of Halliday and Wells are crucial to my study because of their stress of the primacy of conversation in language acquisition, I would be remiss in not noting the earlier writings of Piaget and Vygotsky citing the social aspects of language. Early in his work (1955), Piaget concluded that the pre-school child was egocentric in his speech and it was not until the desire for socialization with others manifested itself (age 7 or 8) that socialized speech emerged. Later in his work, Piaget realized that early speech is socialized as well, agreeing with Vygotsky, who differed with his earlier view. Vygotsky viewed all stages of speech as social, but identifies different functions for

early and later speech. Egocentric speech is vocalized because the child is unable to plan his activities and direct his actions silently as adults do. As speech develops, vocalization disappears and egocentric speech becomes inner speech.



The development of thinking progresses from the social to the individual rather than from the individual to the social.

What has emerged is a complex picture of the child and his language. For a young child, the phonological component of language is much more strongly organized than the syntactic or semantic components. Researchers support the premise that children enjoy playing with sound for its own sake. Children's language is both syntagmatically shorter and less complex than adult language. Thus a child of two will produce one word per utterance while by the age of three or four the complexity will have increased rapidly and he will have mastered the basic syntactic structure of his language. Investigators now recognize the importance of early semantic development as a basis for syntax acquisition (Gleitman et al). As semantics and syntactics expand, the child's lexicon increases as does the complexity of his semantic structure (Garvey, Weir, Halliday). Since language encodes the social system, from his earliest exposure to language the child has begun to master the rules and structures of his social system (Halliday).

Early conversational patterns between parent and child are

closely related to the child's language development (Wells). Metalinguistic awareness develops after the child has acquired all of the *phonological, semantic, and syntactical* skills necessary for fluent speech. It is precisely this awareness that is necessary for the appreciation of riddles, puns, and other forms of humorous language. After examining early kinds of verbal play, I shall seek to establish when metalinguistic awareness transfers itself into the knowledge of the structure and language of the riddle and joke.

a. Verbal Play

Freud's previously noted labeling of 'play' as the first stage of the joke leads us to examine play as a major feature of early language learning. In early years children play with language and experiment with sounds (Weir, 1962; Chukovsky, 1963; El'Konin, 1971, Garvey, 1977). Garvey views the earliest[†] language play as random noises and sounds and not actual precedents for the vowels and consonants of language proper. Infant-parent vocalization games are among the first examples of vocal play encountered by the child. By the age of two or three language advances are apparent and random noises take on meaning (bow wow=dog, ding-a-ling=telephone). Linguistic achievement now experiences a rapid growth as noted by Weir. While studying the speech patterns of a two and a half year old child, she isolated the hierarchy of the linguistic system: sub-phoneme, phoneme, morpheme (words with meanings), and syntax. Her investigation led to the discovery that the child enjoys his play with words. Language play, according to Weir, involves two

areas: sound play and grammatical practice. Sound play appeals to the child as alliteration, rhyming and rhythm. Grammatical practice appears in the child's monologues often as substitution of words of the same class (nouns, verbs, modifiers).

Ex. What color blanket?
What color mop?
What color glass?

The enjoyment in this type of exercise comes in the practice of a linguistic discovery. Weir relates the paragraph to Freud's 'sense in nonsense' as a joke technique. Just as a joke is a play on words that results in enjoyment, so a child's play with words creates enjoyment. The pleasure comes not from the content, but from the linguistic play itself. Garvey notes that as linguistic awareness builds, social play with language develops. Social play encompasses spontaneous rhyming and word play, play with fantasy and nonsense, and play with conversation. This may include inventing ridiculous names (Mrs. Fool-Around, Dumbhead), creating unlikely events, and manipulating sense to make nonsense. Children play with conversational convention indicating that they understand the assumption, expectations, procedural rules that govern conversation.

Chukovsky's view of the child of two as a 'linguistic genius' evolves from the child's highly creative use of language. His collection and analysis of child-language anecdotes illustrate the child's conceptual powers and imagination.

'Can't you see? I'm barefoot all over!'

One kind of verse that Chukovsky describes is nonsense verse, what

he refers to as 'topsy-turvies,' common to Russian folk tales and nursery rhymes.

'In the sea the corn kiln burns
While the ship runs in the cornfield'

Children often compose their own topsy-turvies depending on their knowledge of the real order of things. Tacit knowledge results in recognition of the topsy turvy as nonsense. Recognizing the small child's need for the delight in nonsense, Chukovsky discovered the reason for the popularity of the topsy turvy during the play with his two year old daughter. She derived much pleasure in exhibiting her knowledge of animals and their respective sounds. Her playful distortion of those sounds, 'oggie-meow' and 'rooster-meow' illustrated the importance of language play in the life of the child. Her sudden discovery that the incongruous is funny inspired her to seek more ridiculous combinations of animals and their sounds. Chukovsky believes that the child's use of nonsense furthers a child's sense of reality; from nonsense to sense. The child plays with ideas and reverses the normal order of things consequently creating incongruous humor.

'The birds ring; the bells fly!' (p. 99)

These games are funny because the child recognizes the self-deception and never forgets the reality involved. He is amused by the reversed juxtaposition of things only when actual juxtaposition is clearly known to him. He invents, by means, of language, the incongruous.

Offering views similar to Garvey and Weir, El'Konin suggests

that children's playful manipulation of sounds and words is a natural part of language development. Children use play and its development to help sharpen linguistic awareness, but they also play with sounds for the fun of self-expression and mastery.

Further development of linguistic ability enables the child to create nonsense from sense, directly related to Freud's joking technique, 'sense in nonsense.' I shall follow the development of verbal humor through the development of language itself.

b. From Common Sense to Nonsense: Susan Stewart

The idea of another domain of reality is implied as a place where play, fiction, and fantasy exist by Susan Stewart in her work on language, folklore, and literature (1978). The importance of Stewart's work lies in her establishment of a connection between the use of language and literature, a connection I find strong and viable; a necessary introduction to my study of humor in children's literature. Stewart views language as a part of everyday life but implies that language may be transferred to other reality domains. This alternate domain of reality requires the reframing of language with different patterns of expectation and different rules of interpretation from the language of everyday life. Fiction and play are separated from the everyday world which Stewart proposes is a form of metacommunication. The message 'this is play' involves the exchange of one set of interpretative procedures for another and in itself is a communication about communication: a metacommunication. Stewart refers to the realistic language of

everyday discourse as 'common sense.' When that language is decontextualized, lifted out of context, it becomes 'nonsense.' Common sense is a reasonable, contextualized discourse without which nonsense could not exist.

Both nonsense and humor are the result of a clash of two or more universes or discourses. Humor may be derived from intertextual contradiction (incongruity) but nonsense is humor without a context.

'Marzeetotes an' Dozeetotes an' Liddelamzeetivee.'

This apparent 'gibberish' is a running together of words to create nonsense. 'Mares eat oats and does eat oats and little lambs eat ivy' makes perfect sense when the words are not run together. When intertextual contradictions appear as differences between two universes thought compatible the result is a pun. The pun presents a similarity on the phonological level but differs on the semantic level. When intertextual contractions appear as similarities between two universes perceived to be disparate, the result is something like animals who act like humans (Snoopy, Pogo). Stewart views the developmental pattern of language as a movement from description to one of increasing abstraction and the ability to objectify language: a metalinguistic ability.

Stewart proposes that humorists produce nonsense by using one of five processes: reversals and inversion, the shifting of boundaries, repetition to infinity, simultaneity (cojoining in time), and breaking into parts and recombination according to some principle of the absurd.

1. Reversal and inversion is typified by ungrammatical nonsense poetry with a juxtaposition of incongruities. In this genre, the form is preserved at the expense of the content, a parodic technique.

Twinkle, twinkle, little bat!
How I wonder what you're at
Up above the world you fly,
Like a tea-tray in the sky.

(Alice, p.97,8)

2. The shifting of boundaries in a discourse involves misdirection by surplus or deficiency, of sense or meaning, resulting in a shift in expectations. The listener or reader expects one thing and is presented with another. This is also found in Alice in the mouse's tale written in the shape of a tail and depending on Alice's confusion of the two words. This is a phonological confusion that depends on the poem being read. The difference disappears when the word is seen if the child knows the spellings.

3. Play with infinity can be illustrated by a song that goes on and on and really goes nowhere.

The bear went over the mountain,
The bear went over the mountain,
The bear went over the mountain,
To see what he could see.

(Opies,1959, p.51)

Repetition only amuses orally and when it is written down it seems repetition for repetition's sake. In oral recitation, the sound of the words takes on a different character. The regularity of the frame, the ease in which the words can be recalled, the rising crescendo of sound until the final, usually different, sentence create a systematic pattern in which the young child delights.

4. Simultaneity is a paradox of existence. Two things happen at the same time in more than one space. Children use simultaneity in riddles and rhymes when an accidental verbalizing of the same words occurs simultaneously. The children engage in a kind of ritual: linking fingers and making a wish, and chanting a form of the following:

I wish, I wish this wish to you,
I wish, I wish, your dream comes true.

(Opies, p.334)

5. Breaking into parts and recombining often explores the divergencies between two meanings of a word as in terrible puns.

Do you carrot all for me?
My heart beets for you
With your turnip nose
And your radish face
You are a peach
If we cantaloupe
Lettuce marry
Weed make a swell pear.

(Stewart from Withers, A Rocket in My Pocket, p.193)

An example of transforming a text by rearrangement would be the fractured proverb.

An apple a day keeps the fingers sticky.
or
Better never than late.

These perversions can be classified as a kind of parody because the substitution of elements is done within the dimensions of the text so that the real text stands incongruously related to the twisted one. Children often parody nursery rhymes and poems.

Mary had a little lamb
It was a greedy glutton
She fed it on ice cream all day
And now it's frozen mutton.

(Opies, 1959, p.110)

Relating the various kinds of language nonsense to children's

language development re-enforces my view that without metalinguistic ability linguistic humor cannot be understood or created. The connections implied between speech play and literature have already been set out and will continue to be deepened in my study of the literature. Children must be linguistically able to engage in and comprehend humorous speech play before they can appreciate the humor in books. Stewart's implication that nonsense is part of an ongoing social process concurs with my own and is part of a more global view that language itself is socially learned.

2. Language as a Cognitive Process: the Acquisition of the Riddle and Joke Forms

I now turn to the cognitive aspects of language acquisition. How and when do children learn joking? Children tell jokes before they know what they mean. When does meaning emerge and what factors influence its development? We now have to go beyond Freud's explanation that when a child begins to reason critically, in early stages, play with sound is rejected. As we have seen, even adult jokes play with sound as well as meaning. However, later stages of the development of critical reasoning involve the creation of the 'jest,' as Freud proposed, and seem to correspond to Piaget's stage of concrete operational thinking and McGhee's stage four (see Psychological Studies: Piaget and the Development of Play). The child can now comprehend, appreciate, and create verbal humor.

Horgan (1981) relates the comprehension of riddles to the acquisition of metalinguistic abilities. In a case study of a child

from the age of 1.4 to 7.0, she attempts to show that even a child as young as 1.4 has some metalinguistic ability (recognizing animate vs. inanimate objects). At 1.8 the child was able to play phonetic pattern games (McGhee's stage 3), and sees words as arbitrary symbols for objects.

'Cow go moo, Mommy go Mamoo, Daddy go dadoo,
Ha Ha!!

At the age of 2.3, in a more sophisticated version of the phonetic pattern game, the child must choose a related word and fit it into the proper place preserving syntax and at least some of the semantics.

'Little Bo Peep had Lost her sheep'
became
'Little Bo People had lost her steeple'

By age 2.6, the child was asking^{ing} riddle-like questions:

K. What did Mommy woke?

D. I dunno, what did Mommy woke?

K. Up.

At age 3.0:

K. Mommy, do you love me?

M. Yes.

K. Do you love me to hit you? Ha, Ha!

Horgan sees a developmental process in joking and maintains that joking increases with the growth of cognitive complexity, analogous to the cognitive skills detailed by McGhee. The metalinguistic ability is the emerging awareness of the joke structure. Two approaches to child language are identified by Horgan: the first is 'referential,' which concentrates on semantics and individual words, and the second is 'expressive,' which concentrates on personal-social context and language patterns. She views her case study child as the latter type. Horgan cites her work as supportive

of McGhee's cognitive-perceptual model of incongruity humor. Horgan's work is also related to Freud's progression from nonsense to jokes with meaning as well as Shultz's unresolved to resolved incongruities.

In an empirical study supporting the notion that metalinguistic ability is necessary for the appreciation of jokes and riddles, Fowles and Glanz (1977) asked children (ages 6-9) to retell and explain a series of riddles. General implications were that stages of riddles exist, but not chronologically. The investigators proposed that three factors are necessary for the acquisition of competence with riddles: cognitive development (knowledge that words have more than one meaning), familiarity with riddles and riddle-telling in both cognitive and social terms, and an attention to language. 'Getting the joke' isn't possible in verbal riddles until the language itself is examined.

In connection with his 1972 study of resolved and unresolved incongruities Shultz with Horibe (1974) analyzed hundreds of verbal jokes and concluded many depended upon some linguistic ambiguity for successful resolution. Four types of ambiguity were isolated:

lexical: item has more than one meaning
Order! Order in the court!
Ham and cheese on rye, please, your Honor.

phonological: sequence has two interpretations
handsome, hand some; bean, been.

surface structure: words of sentence can be grouped in two different ways.
'I saw a man-eating shark in the aquarium.'
'That's nothing, I saw a man eating herring in a restaurant.'

deep structure: two different structures
projected on a single surface structure.
'Call me a cab.'
'You're a cab.'

In a follow-up study to determine the ability to detect linguistic ambiguity, Shultz and Pilon (1974) reported different rates of development for each of the four named ambiguities. Phonological ambiguity was detected between the ages of six and nine, lexical ambiguity, between the ages of six and fifteen, in a linear increase, and surface and deep structures not until twelve or older. Conclusions drawn indicate that the transition from pure unresolved incongruity to resolved incongruity occurs between the ages of six and eight. The timing of the transition may be related to the onset of Piaget's concrete operational thought.

Prentice and Fathman (1975) investigated the developmental aspect of children's humor by presenting riddles to children aged 6.8 to 10.8. Their conclusions showed a positive correlation between cognitive maturity and riddle comprehension increased linearly from the youngest to the oldest children while enjoyment decreased. The examiners contributed the latter result to the diminishing appeal of riddles to older children with more complex cognitive structures (Zigler, 1966).

I must now pause and assess what I have said about language and humor. I propose that the development of a metalinguistic awareness is both a social and a cognitive process. In the social process, children learn their culture as they learn their language and derive meaning from both. Once the realistic world is internalized, the child can play with his conceptions of reality. The child learns

socially through interaction and conversation with adults and subsequently other children. Early verbal play leads to making jokes unwittingly and an introduction to the 'fun' of language play when adults laugh at the unintended joke. Eventually, the joke becomes purposeful and a 'sense of humor' begins to develop. This conversational play is a mandatory forerunner to a later appreciation of jokes and riddles, more advanced kinds of verbal play.

The ability to understand and make jokes is a cognitive process as well as a social process. An awareness of the joke structure depends upon cognitive development. As the joke structure becomes more complex, the child must mature cognitively to get the meaning. Progression from the 'non-funny' unresolved riddle to a riddle that is resolved, and therefore funny, depends upon cognitive growth. Researchers offer a link between the growth in joking and cognitive development as offered by Piaget. Riddling is a complex form of verbal play and in order to understand the child's acquisition of the riddle form, it is necessary to look at the structure of the riddle itself and how it is relates to the cognitive process.

3. The Structure of the Riddle

Probably the earliest definition of the riddle is attributable to Aristotle (Poetics): 'Good riddles do, in general, provide us with satisfactory metaphors: for metaphors imply riddles, and therefore a good riddle can furnish a good metaphor.' Further, the frequent presence of an incongruity as a characteristic of riddles

moved Aristotle to state:' The very nature of a riddle is this, to describe a fact in an impossible combination of words (which cannot be done with the real names for things, but can be with their metaphoric substitutes)'.....(Chapter 22, Poetics). Archer Taylor, a modern folklorist (1938), proposes the following definition of the riddle: 'The true riddle or the riddle in the strict sense compares an object to another entirely different.' Taylor refines his definition by attributing two descriptive elements to the riddle, one negative, one positive. Taylor designates the positive element as metaphorical to the riddler, although the riddlee understands it literally. By contrast, the negative element is interpreted correctly as literal. So in the riddle 'Something has eyes and cannot see' (Irish potato, 277a, 1951), the positive element 'eyes' is metaphorical in relation to the answer 'potato,' while the negative element 'cannot see' is literal. Summarizing his definition, Taylor states 'In other words a true riddle consists of two descriptions of an object, one figurative and one literal, and confuses the listener who endeavors to identify an object described in conflicting ways' (1938).

Georges and Dundes (1963), suggesting that Taylor's definition is not broad enough, proposed that the most efficient way to define the riddle is through structural analysis, citing the 'descriptive element' as the minimum unit of analysis. The descriptive element is said to consist of both a 'topic' and a 'comment,' the topic being an item or object which is described, and the comment being a statement concerning the topic.

What sings but has no voice? A kettle.
(McCosh, p.158)

There are two descriptive elements in this riddle, 'sings' and 'no voice.'

Georges and Dundes offer their own structural definition of the riddle: 'A riddle is a traditional verbal expression which contains one or more descriptive elements a pair of which may be in opposition; the referent of the elements is to guessed:' The writers further define their definition by presenting two categories of true riddles based on the presence or absence of descriptive elements in opposition. Riddles without descriptive elements in opposition are termed nonoppositional, and riddles with descriptive elements in opposition are termed oppositional.

'Two rows of white horses on a hill.' (teeth)

nonoppositional metaphorical
topic is horses, answer is teeth

'I know something that sleeps all day and works
at night.' (spider)

nonoppositional literal--topic and referent
are the same.

Oppositional riddles, described as almost always metaphorical, are of three types: antithetical contradictory, privational contradictory, and causal contradictory.

'I went to London but because I didn't go I came
back.' type 1

'What can run but can't walk? A river.
type 2 (McCosh-no.155)

'What goes into the water red and comes out
black?' A red hot poker.
type 3 (Opies, 1959 p.94)

Having previously supported the idea that metalinguistic ability is

necessary for riddle comprehension and creation, it is important to understand just what the structure of riddles is like. We look now to when that ability appears and how developed it must be to be a competent riddler and riddlee.

Sutton-Smith (1976), focusing on riddles in children from the age of six to twelve, relates riddle production to cognitive development and the child's changing concept of the riddle genre as he masters new riddle forms. Acquisition involves both semantic structures and sociolinguistic rules. Relating to Piaget's observation that children show the most interest in riddles at the age at which they show initial competence in problems of classifications, Sutton-Smith indicates that the pre-operational child responds to riddles of unresolved incongruity (Shultz, 1974), what he terms the 'pre-riddle.' By age eight, the riddle of implicit reclassification is dominant (resolved incongruity). Sutton-Smith notes that Piaget does not account for older children's interest in riddles not involving classification, such as the parody riddle. Accounting for this intrinsic development and interest in riddles, he views riddling as a game of arbitrary power which contributes to children's social development by providing experience in dealing with interrogation, ambiguity, and humiliation.

McDowell (1979) undertook a comprehensive study of the riddling tradition by examining children's interrogative routines. He found the riddle to be a ludic transformation of interrogation; that is, a playful inversion of questioning. The riddling technique requires competence in the texture of riddling (sound patterns), the

structure of riddling (syntactic and semantic codes), and the content of riddling. McDowell proposes riddling to be socially constructed with its own etiquette that is adapted to individual needs. The acquisition of the riddling technique involves an integration of psychological, psycho-social, and linguistic development. The children in McDowell's study fall into Piaget's two middle stages of cognitive development: representation (from speech to 7 or 8 years) and concrete operation (7-12 yrs.). The former stage involves the acquisition of speech and the capacity to symbolize, the latter, the emergence of the child's logical reasoning. McDowell's model of riddling necessitates the acquisition of the Piagetian stages of intellectual development prior to the child's acquiring a riddling technique. Moreover, the kinds of riddling developed at each stage complement the succeeding stage of intellectual development. Between the ages of 5 and 8, children move from pre-riddles and flawed and descriptive routines to proper riddles with a secure grasp of the riddle genre. McDowell proposes that the onset of the concrete operational stage coincides with the emergence of understanding riddles proper. He also suggests that the shift from phonological to semantic dominance in child language accounts for the child's acquisition of the riddling technique. Both in Sanches and Kirshenblatt-Gimblett's discussion of verbal art (1976) and McDowell's analytic model of competence in riddling, 'there is a chronologically determined movement from sound to sense' (McDowell, p.212). The foundation of McDowell's model of riddling involves a child's intellectual capacities, language acquisition, and culture.

In another attempt to relate riddle competency to the structure of the riddle, Yalisove (1978) classified riddles and presented them to children in grades 1 through 8 and grade 10. He suggests that the riddle device is based on a misleading and resolution element (Shultz's resolved and unresolved incongruity).

'What is black and white and re(a)d all over?
A newspaper.

The misleading element is the context of colors suggesting red, and the resolution is based on the homonym read.

Yalisove denotes three categories of riddles: conceptual tricks based on reality, language ambiguity, and absurdity. The reality riddles have no word play involved:

'How many balls of string would it take to reach
the moon?'
'One, but it would have to be a big one.'

Language ambiguity includes presupposition riddles, puns, and name-mentioned riddles.

Absurdity: 'How can you fit six elephants into a VW?
Three in front and three in back.'

Results suggest that the youngest children (grades 1-3) liked conceptual trick riddles and focused on 'silly' riddles, the intermediate children (grades 4-6) focused on the justification of the incongruity, and the oldest children only (grades 6-8) perceived the structural elements of the riddle.

D. The Development of Incongruity in Children's Linguistic Humor

We saw, in the chapter on the psychological studies of humor,

that incongruity is the earliest form of humor. Language researchers have established that the recognition of verbal humor in language development precedes performance; 'getting the joke' precedes 'making a joke.' How does the ability to 'make the joke' humor develop? Specifically, how does the language encode the humor? Since particular formal features of the child's speech play production reflect the structural concerns of his developing language, we should be able to see this development reflected in the body of the child's productions.

The use of language as an expression of humor by children is explored by Shultz and Robillard (1980). Their main contention states that language is a natural avenue for the expression of humor since it is a system based on rules, and it is the violation of such rules that accounts for a large part of linguistically based humor. The writers suggest that the development of linguistic humor is based on certain kinds of metalinguistic awareness. They refer to the speaker's or listener's implicit awareness of rule systems. A knowledge of linguistic rules emerges during the course of the child's language development and governs his understanding of language patterns and meanings. Once the rules system is internalized, any violation becomes incongruous. It is the capacity to reflect on one's language, the beginning of metalinguistic awareness, that is central to understanding linguistic incongruities. The creation of verbal jokes depends upon understanding and utilizing different kinds of linguistic ambiguity: phonological, lexical, and syntactic. By the time a

child is three or four years of age, he can combine phonemes into syllables. Distorted or immature articulations and tongue twisters are humorous phonological incongruities. Humorous verse, while not explicitly violating phonological rules, shows how phonological humor works.

Now I lay me down to rest,
I pray to pass tomorrow's test;
If I should die before I wake,
That's one less test I'll have to take.

The poetic form (based on an actual prayer) is used humorously to express hostilities that would otherwise be difficult to utter.

1. Violation of Morphology

Once children become implicitly aware of the rules governing morphology, their violation creates humor. 'Play languages' are the usual forms of morphological humor. North American children use 'pig Latin' which utilizes reversal and addition. In order to participate, children must possess two psycholinguistic prerequisites: 'segmentation' (the ability to separate morphemes into individual phonemes), and the ability to comprehend 'the word' and conduct its analysis and formation. When those conditions are met, the following can be spoken and understood.

eakingspay igspay atinlay ancay ebay eryvay
umoroushay eedinday
(Speaking pig Latin can be very humorous
indeed.) (Shultz & Robillard)

2. Violation of Semantics

Semantics is concerned with the meaning of words and the rules

for building combinations of words that are meaningful. Until about age six, children experience difficulty in conceptualizing the nature of the violation of semantic rules. Shultz and Robillard identify humor based on semantic incongruities as meaningless words, a combination of semantic features that are not permissible, and the use of inappropriate names (previously noted by Wolfenstein and Garvey). Syntax, or word order, has produced virtually no humor of incongruity in the literature. However, both Gleitman et al and the de Villiers gave anecdotal evidence of children responding to syntactic anomalies.

3. Violation of Pragmatics

All of the linguistic features of humor are learned by children in the interaction of conversation when the language exchange itself becomes a kind of play. At first this begins with adults, who will trick and puzzle children with words in the same way as they hide things (toys, their faces in peek-a-boo), exaggerate gestures, and make excessive or overextended sounds. The adults produce the incongruities in unexpected replies to questions, strange repetitions, and funny sounds. Children engage in making incongruities actively when they have acquired enough competence in the language to play tricks with skill. Bates (1974) cites over-literalism as a violation of pragmatics in which children act out instructions literally: hold your tongue or watch your step. The supreme example may be found in Alice and her conversation with the Mad Hatter.

E. A Summary of the Development of Metalinguistic Awareness

Time and again language researchers link their speculations about linguistic humor to Piaget's stages of cognitive development. After examining the development of both the reception and creation of linguistic humor by the child, I have developed the following chart organizing children's responses to riddles and jokes as humor based on ambiguity.

sound play (phonological elements):
Weir, Garvey, El'Konin

phonetic pattern games: Horgan

semantic anomaly: Gleitman et al,
the de Villiers, Chukovsky

phonological ambiguity:
Shultz & Pilon

Preoperational
Period
(before age 7)

pre-riddles: Sutton-Smith

conceptual trick riddles:
Yalisove

riddles of unresolved incongruity:
Shultz

riddles of resolved incongruity:
Shultz

'getting the joke':
Fowles & Glanz

riddles of implicit reclassification:
Sutton-Smith

justification of incongruity:
Yalisove

Concrete Operational
Period (ages 7-11)

morphological incongruity (play
language): Shultz & Robillard

lexical ambiguity:
Shultz & Pilon

pragmatic incongruity:
Shultz & Pilon

surface and deep structure riddles:
Shultz & Pilon

structural elements of the riddle: Yalisove	Formal Operational Period (ages 11 to adult)
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parody: Sutton-Smith

My summary indicates that researchers suggest that metalinguistic play precedes metalinguistic awareness. The child plays with language, tells the joke, and has an effect on others before he actually understands what is funny. Modern investigators agree that the child acquires language in a social setting through conversation directly linked to his acquisition of cognitive skills. Therefore, by the time the child has reached the age of Piaget's concrete operational period, he has acquired what some might call a 'sense of humor.' I find it all a bit too 'pat': child plays with language, child learns the rules of language, child creates incongruities, child appreciates incongruities. Something is missing. What about the experience of the individual child? My own experience indicates that while children tell a lot of jokes at the age of eight or nine, they understand fewer than they admit. Rather than admit failure to 'get the joke,' they will embark on a lengthy explanation that points up their lack of understanding. So much of what we laugh at depends upon our experience. Consider the

following riddle.

Why did they have to change the water in the
Olympic pool?
Because Mark Spitz.

(McCosh, p.197)

The riddle is funny at two levels when it is presented visually. The child who has never heard of Mark Spitz, the Olympic champion, lacks the experience to get the double meaning (spits, Spitz) from the riddle. As joking and riddling grow in complexity to include parodies and social and cultural topics, children will undergo different sets of experience. Jokes are only funny if our own individual experiences coincide with the joker's. A sharing of the commonplace is necessary to provide a sharing of the incongruous. We cannot take that sharing among children for granted. Individual exposure to the stages of language cannot be identical. It follows, then, that individual recognition and creation of language incongruities will vary as well. As Wolfenstein offered, the average child reaches early adolescence before the intricacies of joking are fully realized. The development of a sense of the incongruous comes as the child is able to reflect on what he sees and hears. Margaret Donaldson, in Children's Minds (1978), suggests that reading helps the development of this reflexive thinking. In mastering literary forms of humor the child has certain options not possible in verbal humor: the text stays where it is for re-examination and, as a reader, the child becomes both the teller and the told. My own view is that verbal and literary humor are very different. The child must learn the 'frame' of the literary humor just as he learns the 'frame' of the riddle or joke, but how

he feels about the subject is even more important in the book than it is in the joke. If the author's humor is not shared by the child, he simply puts the book down. Peer pressure dictates his participation in joking or be left out, while no one need know if the book is read or not. Reflexive thinking only occurs when the writer and the reader share the same set of values. However, writers do not build their stories around riddles or jokes, rather they build them around funny characters and odd situations, weaving humorous discourse throughout. Capturing and keeping the child's imagination is a formidable task.

From the earliest days of language play and interaction with people, children move to interaction with text. Before I move to the study of the literary forms of humor for adults and children, I shall look at the clown, the comic character who bridges the adult/child world in both verbal and literary humor.

VI. THE CLOWN

In the last chapter, I attempted to show how the child's language development is influenced by both social and cognitive factors. The child's first exposure to 'fun' in language play comes as an infant interacting with his parents. The parent plays the clown, hiding, making strange noises, gesturing, and singing funny songs. Later, roles are exchanged and the child plays the clown, mimicking the words and actions of his playful parent. Just as this early language play leads to the development of joking and riddling in the child, clowning antics lead to an appreciation of funny figures in folk and literary traditions. The figure of the clown has other links with childhood. He is a simple figure, a child-like bumbler over whom the child may prevail. The adult relates to the clown as a vestige of childhood and recognizes the child/adult qualities the clown embodies. In his appeal to both adults and children, the clown links the generations. At the same time, he represents and embodies all kinds of humor, from the silent humorous gesture of the traditional mimic to the complexity of the comic character in great comic literature. In this, the pre-oral tradition (of the *Commedia del Arte*, for example), is the link with the subtleties of television comics and cartoon characters. Clowns embody man's incongruities (the cognitive), mirror society's ills (the social), and balance the action between the comic and the tragic (the affective), the three vital areas necessary for the humorous reaction. As part of the pursuit of this thesis, I sought

out Martin Solity, a modern English clown. As Rhubarb, he entertains audiences with feats of balance, mime, and humorous touches of magic. I am suggesting that as a modern day clown he is continuing a tradition that began in the early days of Greek drama. Not content with my own conjecture, I talked with Rhubarb to seek out his idea of clowning to discover where it fits into the literary history of the clown. I have interspersed, within the body of the text of this chapter, Solity's comments as a modern clown to show how his views have been at the heart of clowning for generations. His views are meshed within the actual history of clowns and clowning in Europe and America. What emerges is today's clown relating his personal feelings embedded in an historical look at clowns of the past. Finally, I shall discuss the psychological and sociological factors present in the clown as a representation of the imperfect man.

"I think a clown is an archetype, a caricature, a cartoon character- an exaggerated character which a person uses as a basis for entertaining people."

The prototype of the clown is the roly-poly toy and which, when endlessly punched, bounces up each time with a continuing smile on his face. He has neither time nor space and endlessly repeats his incongruous actions whether continually falling or rising or repeating an action without end. Victor Borge, a Danish comedian, again and again begins to play the piano never finishing a piece, exemplifying the modern-day buffoon.

A. The Aristophanic Tradition

As far back as the sixth century Doric farce, clowns were provided with the opportunity for comic acting and portraying the humor of everyday life. However, it was Aristophanes, the Greek Old Comedy playwright(445-380 B.C.), whose biting characterizations of contemporary figures began a long line of literary clowns. The clown-figure in Aristophanes was represented by the chorus which developed from the earlier komos or revel, which is thought to be the origin of the comedic form itself(Fry,1963).

B. Medieval Clowning

During the late Middle Ages, the miracle and morality plays introduced the buffoon, vice, usually wearing a cap with ass' ears, who was a boon companion to the devil, his partner in foolishness. Langer(1953) views the relation between the devil and the fool as existing possibly because of the Christian concept identifying the devil with flesh and sin with lust. Vice was a dominant figure who fought, danced, and used foul language replete with puns and the play-on-words which were part of his satirical comments on society (Parrott,1949). The allegory of the earlier miracle plays developed into the satire of the later moralities. By the end of the 15th century English morality plays included broad comedy burlesquing the everyday life of the time or turning to political satire. At this time the allegorical features of the miracles and moralities gave way to the realistic characterizations in the interlude.

"There has always been the clown- someone who is letting it all hang out....."(Rhubarb)

The best of these court presentations were by John Heywood(1497-1578) whose plays The Four P's characterized four contemporary rogues: Palmer, Pardoner, Potycary(an itinerant quack) and a Pedlar, all trading absurd tales to determine who is the biggest liar. Heywood substituted contemporary English figures for allegorical characters and thereby converting edification to amusement(Parrott).

"Clowning existed before circuses- it extends beyond the circus- it existed in the music hall- in vaudeville Persona exists beyond the script- an actor who plays the role is not a real clown- that's different- he takes on a part for the duration of the play. A clown takes on his clown character that is not limited by the script."
(Rhubarb)

The comic character vice was the forerunner to the jester or medieval court fool. During the early Renaissance, which came under classical influence, Nicholas Udall(1506-56) wrote Ralph Roister Doister whose clownish character, Merrygreek, is a combination of the English vice and the Latin parasite. In the old comedy, Gammer Gurton's Needle (1566), a central role is played by Cacurgus, the fool, whose language distortion added to its vigorous comedy (Parrott). According to Welshford(1966), the medieval court fool was a regular institution in England by the 14th and 15th centuries. He was a significant figure in society, art, and literature. Treated kindly, both physically and spiritually, he was employed by merchants as well as by kings and noblemen. By Elizabethan times the household fools were eclipsed by theatrical clowns who were eccentric servants that served as the butts or wits

of the household. Their follies served not as defects, but as endearing qualities. Bu the Renaissance, the fool was a fashionable figure and literature was full of clowns.

"There is always a difference between stage clowns and a clown who plays himself." (Rhubarb)

The buffoon is essentially a folk character who remained through the literary stages of comedy in Italy, France, and England (Langer). Harlequin, a stock character of Italian comedy(1560), became the buffoon of France and ultimately of English pantomime. He has a shaved head, wears a mask and variegated tights, and carries a wooden sword. He is often invisible to all but Columbine, his sweetheart, and a rival to Pierrot or another clown for her love. Pierrot is traditionally a tall, thin young man with his face and hair covered with white flour or powder. He wears a white gown with long sleeves and a large row of buttons down the front. From the simple figure of the pantomime he gradually emerged as a romantic figure hiding behind a comic mask.

.....the juggler, the traditional white clown face and brilliant red, green, and blue garb. All the rest is done with mime.... Rhubarb, God's own fool sent to earth with a message of joy.(The Australian, 11 March,1980)

In the humbler forms of comedy as in the pantomime, the buffoon was a more vigorous type personified by the irascible, humpbacked, hook-nosed Punch. He is thought to be derived from Pulcinella, the dull servant of the 'commedia dell'arte,' who was a popular character in Italian puppet shows. Langer identifies Punch as a vital living being who faces life alone while tumbling from one

escapade to another forever receiving his 'eternal thrashing.' He is, says Langer, the 'elan vital.' His adventures, mishaps, absurd complications, ludicrous expectations and disappointments are seized by a kind of primitive rhythms that propel him through his frustrating but invigorating life. He represents man amoral, often victorious, often foiled, but always comical because his vitality remains unimpaired and his zest for life intact. Langer views the buffoon as responsible for the buildup of what she terms 'comic rhythm.' He eventually moved from being the central figure of the folk drama to the more realistic characters who contribute to the overall action.

"When it 'works' as a clown, people are sympathizing with that duality- they laugh because it is near reality." (Rhubarb)

As a mime, Rhubarb continues the tradition of representing the frustrations of man making the simple process of putting his trousers on impossibly intricate: in goes one leg, down he falls, up he comes, tripping again over the loose, flapping trouser leg only to repeat his actions over again moving the children to shout, "This way, hold them this way!"

"The way my clown works is that he can do things that the audience can't do and can't do things that the audience can do." (Rhubarb)

C. The Clown in Elizabethan Drama

Frye(1957) cites four buffoon types in Renaissance comedy, professionals fools or clowns who posses eccentricities and characteristics that are blatantly incongruous. The oldest buffoon

of this type is the parasite, already mentioned in Gammer Gurton's Needle and also personified in Mosca in Volpone. He is a descendant from Middle Greek Comedy as is the second buffoon-type, the cook, who interrupts comedies in order to bustle about making long-winded speeches about his chosen profession. This character is enlarged and becomes the orchestrator, the third buffoon-type, who is at the center of the comic action. Derived from Aristophanic tradition, Frye describes him this way:

In Falstaff and Sir Toby Belch we can see the affinities of the buffoon or entertainer type both with the parasite and with the master or revels. If we study this entertainer or host role carefully we shall soon realize that it is a development ofAristophanic comedy (p.175)

Falstaff is one such clown, a self-indulgent braggart, who revels in his lechery and chicanery, lies without scruple and unashamedly seeks to turn everything to his own advantage. His gross physical size is incongruous with his shrewd professional knavery.

Feste, of Twelfth Night, another entertainer type, a ringleader and merry companion who sees truth and is wiser than his betters(Welsford). The jester's function is to preserve proportion while helping to play with the boundaries of reality, tipping the scales toward make-believe. Serving as critics of their contemporary world, Shakespeare's comic clowns differ from his tragic clowns. The fool of Lear does not create the comic for comedy itself in criticizing society, but tells the truth in a witty but cruel attack on the king.

"Shakespeare developed his clowns from play to play-that's closer to real clown than a simple

clown role. His clowns existed before his plays were written down." (Rhubarb)

Frye names the fourth type of buffoon as 'agroikos' meaning either 'churlish or rustic.' This character may be the 'straight man,' whose solemn visage and demeanor are the foils for the humor. This is Jaques, the melancholy fool, who leaves the scene in As You Like It before the final festivities. A lighter, more rustic buffoon is Corin, the simple fool of the same play, and often found in the pastoral.

Thus far, in the history of clowning, we have followed the clown from the Aristophanic tradition of satirizing contemporary figures through the medieval clowning that included mime disguise visible in both society and the arts to the literary clowns of Elizabethan drama. We turn now to the modern American clown, both in the old tradition of clowning and a new tradition unique to American literature.

D. The 20th Century American Clown: the 'Holy Fool'

The tradition of the wise fool links the European and American traditions of clowning. The wise fool of the pre-twentieth century American humor originated in the Old Testament, Medieval literature Shakespeare, and tribal tradition (Mintz, 1977). He is a character who, within his clowning, utters unfailingly honest assertions about man and the institutions of society. He speaks freely because he is

protected in his role as clown and fears no repercussions. He is, after all, only joking and not to be taken seriously. But beneath the verbal play lies truth and a candid picture of the world around him.

In his first stage, the wise fool is a negative figure, exposing folly by his thoughts and actions, not a prevalent figure in American humor. His second stage as 'the innocent,' who exposes folly by his good nature, is the Brother Jonathan of American literature. The third model, positive and a 'common sense' figure, is the most important to the literature of America. The archetype of the common sense fool was Will Rogers, the best known humorist in America for two decades (from 1915). A descendant of the Artemus Ward type of humor, he was the first great cowboy comic. His actual joking sessions with national politicians embodied the essence of his homespun philosophy. At a much later time (1958), Harry Golden became known as the Jewish Will Rogers.

W.C. Fields continued in the tradition of the classic clown with his bulbous nose and rotund belly, one of life's losers. He created an additional incongruity by delivering his tales of adventure in a nasal monotone with a kind of low keyed throwaway style (Blair and Hill, 1978).

The self-deprecating humor that became evident in the literature of the 1930's extended to the comedians. The Marx Brothers, Jack Benny, and Fred Allen represent the trend well. This ends an epoch of clowns with disguise and masks and begins the era of the 'real' clown: bald, owl-eyed (Jack Benny, Myron Cohen), a modern day folk

hero. They were a combination of immigrant and second generation comedians with a variety of ethnic humors(Bier, 1968).

The radio comedians of the 30's and 40's (Benry, Berle, Hope, Caesar) carried much of the same material with them to television and films. The new genre (TV) brought into the forefront the situation comedy with its self-deprecating heroes appearing weekly in continuing sagas about bumbling family members (The Jack Benry Show, Our Miss Brooks, I Love Lucy). It was during this period that the youthful and grotesque comic, Jerry Lewis, captured audiences with his whiny, juvenile voice epitomizing all that was frightenly indicative of the American adolescent.

The sixties saw a rejuvenation of the quality of American humor with the rise of the young, ethnic comedians, some self-deprecating (Bill Cosby, Woody Allen)and some biting(Alan King, Don Rickles). They satirized topical targets such as American presidents, Victorian morality, sexism, and racism, all anti-Establishment. Much of the comedy ridiculed white bigotry by the exaggeration of the prejudice upon which that bigotry was based (The Jeffersons, Sanford & Son, All in the Family).

The 'Schlemiel'

The fool of Yiddish humor is a folklore figure who embodies the follies of his culture, is harmless, vulnerable, inept and greatly ridiculed(Wisse,1971). Carried over to America as comic relief, he is the immigrant who serves as a cultural reaction to Anglo Saxon restraint in actions, thought, and speech. When American Jewish

writers accepted their birthright(after World War II), Jewish characters were explored in fiction and the schlemiel turned hardship into laughter. The writers, like their comedian counterparts, mock their persecutors as well as themselves. Their adversaries were unfailingly stupid and they were the fools, the losers:'schlemiels and schnorrers.' The stand-up comic made America receptive to the American-Jewish literature of Bellows and Roth(Cohen, 1978). Leo Rosten's The Education of Hyman Kaplan(1937) is a classic example of the urban Jewish comic hero who constantly struggles with an unfamiliar language in an unfamiliar world, the archetype of the immigrant clown.

Thus far in my history of clowns and clowning in oral and literary traditions, I have been emphasizing the incongruous, that aspect of the clown's character or actions that is paradoxical. Incongruity is basic to humor, but as I have proposed earlier, it is through psychological and sociological influences that a sense of humor is acquired. As the embodiment of man's flaws and inadequacies, the clown is a psychological scapegoat and a sociological target.

E. Clowning and its Psychological Connections: the Taboo

Like Ruth Newo(1963) Langer cites the erotic as the origin of comedy. From the prehistoric fertility rites to contemporary comedy man has been fascinated by his very existence. This corresponds to Levine's view(1977) that clowning is an acting out of primary drives that are taboo. In the community of the Zuni(American Indians), the

clown was a significant political figure, at once the buffoon and fearsome and supernatural. His impersonations of important community figures contained the taboo subjects of incest and perversion and other kinds of sexual indecencies all in the name of humor. The humorous pranks served to divert attention from the taboo quality of the subject matter and provided a catharsis for the community.

"Humor is about one's own vulnerability. What people laugh at is their own fears." (Rhubarb)

Psychoanalytic theories (Freud et al) are deeply embedded in the figure of the clown through the act of releasing one's aggressions and repressions through laughter at a comic figure representing man's imperfections.

The clown's disproportion is hilarious to one who puts it in proportion. The same man stands firmly on the edge of disaster watching the clown disappear over the edge. (Blair and Hill).

The clown, then, is, for all of us, a catharsis, a Freudian release. He represents our frustrations, our disappointments, and our failures, and enables us to laugh at life's tragedies. Our physical laughter is a release of psychological tensions and pressures. The comic character is a defective figure of man that had its beginnings with Aristotle and the Greek clowns and continued in the literary tradition through the Middle Ages, Shakespeare, right through all of English and American comic works. This comic relief applies to the clowns of society (the joker, the life-of-the-party, the butt of the jokes) as well as to the clowns

and fools of literature. When the clown wins over the politician or the wise man there is a relief of pressure, a freedom, that can only be accomplished by the fool.

Langer suggests that the English Punch's appeal probably lies in the aggressions he allows one to satisfy. Rejecting superiority as too narrow ^a source of laughter (Hobbes, Bergson), Langer submits that what we laugh at does not explain the nature of laughter. Yet it is possible to view laughing at the clown as a superior laughter. Watching the clown disappear 'over the edge,' we are the common sense figures superior to the nonsense figure of the clown. He satisfies man's need for a sense of superiority.

Taboo, according to Stewart, involves moving away from the accepted form into an increasingly formless structure. Referring to the trickster as a 'personification of ambivalence,' Stewart views him as both a creator and a destroyer, and a fool who fools others while he himself is fooled.

The systematic nature of trickster's activities points to his position as a violator of not only specific taboos, but also of the idea of the taboo, the idea of a rule that cannot be violated. (p.62)

The taboo is a vital part of children's humor and will be dealt with again in the section on children's oral and written humor.

Children begin to laugh and joke about areas of functioning over which they have achieved mastery. Included among these is body functioning, language and verbal fluency, motor skills, and ultimately interpersonal relations. Children's scatological jokes, plays-on-words, puns, riddling, and general clowning all reflect

these developmental steps.

An excellent illustration of the child's as well as the adult's affirmation of the ability to overcome fear of ineptness is in the circus clown. Children laugh at his grotesque features and clothing, his exaggerated clumsiness, and generally silly tricks. In his self-debasement, the clown humorously represents the concerns and achievements of children concerning their physical inadequacies.

"What people laugh at is their own fears.....The first gut reaction on meeting a clown is fear- it is the unknown- their fears are very real- making a joke about death doesn't make the fear less real..."(Rhubarb)

Children laugh at the clown just as they laugh at a physically deformed person. The exaggerated antics of the clown evoke great laughter in children because it is all in fun. The children are aware that the clown merely pretends to be clumsy and grotesque. They recognize the broken boundaries of the everyday world. They share in this pretense perceiving that the skill of the clown is responsible for his absurd behavior.

"The simpler the thing is the more you can relate to people failing at it-...I can have a five minute routine getting my trousers and jacket right..."(Rhubarb)

Both the child's early sense of inadequacy concerning his body movements and his eventual mastery of those movements are involved in his laughing at the clown.

F. Clowning and its Sociological Connections

Klapp(1950) outlines a sociological representation of the fool.

The clown or fool symbolizes a person or conduct that is ridiculous and inferior. Every group has a fool who stands for the rejected values, lost causes, and incompetencies of life. Unlike the villain, the clown's pranks are not evil so he is tolerated and looked upon with amusement. People become fools when society defines them as such. Social defining processes are jokes and popular humor, namecalling, literary and artistic satire, and propaganda(Jimmy Carter's teeth). The social structure characterizes the clown as low, ridiculous, tolerable, and licensed. The status of the clown is a paradox: he is both looked down upon and valued, ridiculed and enjoyed. Klapp suggests that the clown has specific social functions. He included comic relief, a cathartic symbol for aggression, and the scapegoat as primary functions. The clown is also responsible for status reduction by eliminating incompetents from influential positions and serves as a social control by enforcing proper conduct. Through social interactions man learns what is the common sense view of his place in society. When that view is tilted and the play with boundaries occurs, he is presented with the imperfect view of man. The clown embodies man's follies presenting a nonsensical caricature of man in society.

"Their problems are the problems of reality and frustration."(Rhubarb)

The multiconsciousness of the clown both on and off the stage is responsible for his detachment from and his involvement in the action. Similarly, the court-fool is detached from social life yet

very much a part of it. He is a voice speaking both from within and without, a temporary being playing with the boundaries of reality, threatened with extinction, yet suspended in time and space. Acting as a social preservative and providing a stabilization of the vanity of his betters, he winks at his audience who see a bit of themselves in him. He is the creator of a sense of freedom, both psychological and sociological, and the incongruous representation of the imperfect man. For us he is especially important for he is the link between adult and child, both freed to laugh at his impossible antics. Having examined his role in the literary history of Europe and America, I shall return to him in my discussion of children's humorous literature.

I propose that the clown of oral tradition is the origin of the comic character in literature. His role in Greek and Elizabethan drama as well as in all other periods of drama through to the 20th century, has been outlined. His shape has changed, his costume is gone, but his role remains the same: to provoke humor with incongruous words and actions or in absurd situations. In children's books the clown-role is sometimes assumed by a child, sometimes by an adult, and sometimes by an animal. He is the ongoing link between the earliest humorous literature and children's funny books.

VII THE LITERARY TRADITION OF HUMOR

Having proposed that a sense of the incongruous, a metalinguistic awareness, and social consciousness are prerequisites for the appreciation of verbal humor, we turn to literature and some of its great comic works to seek out their presence in the written tradition. Many works could be interpreted to explicate our contentions about the nature of literary humor. It is not possible in the confines of this thesis to touch upon all. I have selected prototypes for the argument I shall make about the nature of humor in children's literature. Before I begin, I must make it clear that in no way is this discourse intended to be an in-depth study of each literary work that is examined. Rather, I shall identify the comic techniques of the writers of the texts I examine that contribute to my argument about the literary tradition of humor.

Great literary works of humor survive because writers make fun of the literary form in general, both in the drama and the novel, and the play or book itself in particular. Comic characters engage in improbable actions that are framed by amusing discourse. Although each generation undergoes social changes that alter the way comedy is written, classical humorous works continue to survive. We, as part of the twentieth century, can read Jane Austen and marvel at her ability to ridicule nineteenth century manners and morals. Austen's skill in saying exactly the opposite of what she means is classic irony. Her highly exaggerated characterizations engage in ludicrous actions that illustrate the author's views of

the landed middle-classes. This 'tongue-in-cheek' humor continues to amuse readers of subsequent generations. This kind of literary humor is a survival of the culture as well as the survival of the literary tradition. The same kind of skill is necessary to create lasting works of humor for children. Mr. Popper's Penguins (Atwater, 1938) is a classically funny book written for children in the 1930's and still popular in the 1980's. The extraordinary comic situation created by the authors is timeless: penguins and humans sharing the same household. The laughable predicaments that arise from such a situation continue to amuse children. Thus humorous combination of characters, situations, and discourse is accomplished in a highly individualistic way by writers. My task is to uncover the ways in which they operate.

In my opinion, it is the continuing commonality of society's themes, the caricatures of the absurdities of man and the attractions of linguistic play that enable each succeeding generation to appreciate a comic work. The sense of the incongruous can be established in each of these areas. The creators of the enduring literature are those authors who, in highly particular ways, have best exemplified the general abiding qualities of the comic in form and content. I shall examine some of the great comic works of Europe and America to try to discover the reasons for their survival.

A. Humor as Discourse

Susan Stewart has made an important contribution to the

identification of comic techniques in classical humorous texts. She offers the view that appreciating humor is only possible when the listener or reader can juxtapose the comic with the realistic situations of everyday life.

....just as any oral or written text will come into existence through the interpretative performance of members, so is any social situation contingent upon members' interpretative performance.....(p. 49)

Stewart refers to these situations as 'common sense' events, situations whose interpretations must be commonly shared (by means of acknowledged conventions) by the members of a culture who inherit a common social tradition. These interpretative acts are part of a social process that extends from the context of everyday life to the literary text and back again. The aspects of common sense that can be especially manipulated through nonsense are relationships between members of society and society's hierarchies. Readers of comic texts must engage in certain interpretative procedures in order to make nonsense out of common sense. These procedures are indicative of a shared tradition that encompasses both oral and written texts. It is a tradition shared by reader, writer, and dramatist. Writers who create nonsense out of common sense do so by playing with the boundaries of the text and flaunting their fictive status (Stewart). It is done (through farce and satire) by pointing up the absurdities of society, shifting from reality to fantasy, from author to text, and thereby creating a multi-consciousness in the reader.

In each fiction where the author becomes a character and the sense of reading and writing

become implicated in the text, the boundary between fiction and reality - between text and context - is dissolved and reformed, and the interpreted, the fictive, nature of reality is emphasized. (Stewart, p.111)

Although I have previously discussed Stewart's views of language as play and the creation of humor as dependent upon a clash between common sense and the incongruous (see Language Chapter, 'From Common Sense to Nonsense'), I shall now give a brief summary of how the five techniques she proposes as implicit in the production of nonsense apply to literature.

Stewart's main theme of 'boundary breaking' comes into literary text with reference to the kinds of discourse assigned by convention to different kinds of literary productions. The first kind of humor is derived from play with discourse boundaries. In texts, these include the things we have characterized as normal behavior (Stewart, p.85). Linguistic play dissolves boundaries and achieves the incongruous with the play on words, the metaphor, the creation of a paradox, the use of rhyme, puns, and an aura of the absurd through conversation. This boundary breaking is achieved in the following ways.

The first is a surplus of signification which subjects a text to multiple interpretations in which more goes on than the reader can possibly construe at any given time. In written discourse, where the distance between the reader and the writer precludes any direct communication, the author may include superfluous information that the reader organizes and interprets not knowing whether or not his design is appropriate. Stewart draws from Stephen Leacock's

nonsense novel, Gertrude the Governess: or Simple Seventeen (1929) to illustrate.

It was a wild and stormy night on the West Coast of Scotland. This, however, is immaterial to the present story as the scene is not laid on the coast of Scotland. For that matter, the weather was just as bad on the East Coast of Ireland.

Leacock plays with exactly the point the text makes and moves to reflect on it so that he confuses the reader by forcing him to assume that those details are part of the narrative, when they are, in fact, superfluous.

A second type of play with boundaries, a deficiency of signification, makes the text enigmatic by breaking its continuity or by refusing to close the frame around it. Sterne does this in Tristram Shandy when the reader is told to write his own description of Widow Wadman: 'as unlike your wife as your conscience will let you,' allowing the reader physical space in the narrative to do so.

Stewart's third boundary breaking technique is manifesting the implicit which includes elements that would ordinarily be invisible: shaping the language on the page, calligrams, verse, or some other way of forcing the physical reality into the fictive frame. Play with boundaries may include the manipulation of the boundaries of time as well as space.

Just as play with boundaries of discourse events involves a transformation of members' expectations regarding the horizon of the situation, so play with infinity involves a transformation of another aspect of members' expectations - their sense of events as characterized by distinguishable beginnings and endings. These boundaries depend upon a shared sense of what counts and does not count - a sense of discrete events that can be arranged in a

temporal order, one after the other. The discreteness of events depends upon a temporal as well as spacial sense of closure, and each sense implicates, is relative to, the other. (Stewart, p. 116)

Stewart has offered an analysis of other techniques as ways of making nonsense in literature. Since these techniques are also used by writers to reset boundaries between reality and fantasy, I shall refer to them as other ways readers and writers play with boundaries.

For example, simultaneity creates, in the reader, the paradox of being in more than one place at a time. The simultaneity of two events in a tale dissolves them into each other in time while they cannot be dissolved in space and therefore denies the possibility by saying 'two events.' The splitting of the reader's attention into two moves the text closer to nonsense. The interchange of the author's role as writer and character or writer and narrator exemplifies this technique. Fielding does it in Tom Jones as he moves between his dual roles of author and narrator.

....the excellence of the mental entertainment consists less in the subject than in the author's skill in well dressing it up. How pleased, therefore will the reader be to find that we have, in the following work, adhered closely to one of the highest principles of the best cook.....(Fielding, p.3)

The reader is forced to a multi-conscious position of viewing the writer in two places at once, a temporal and spacial impossibility.

Reversal or inversion plays with boundaries by upsetting the commonsense order of things to create an incongruity. The reversal of discourse takes for granted a shared ordering of events by the given members of a group. The denial of discourse, a reversal in a

literary text, is illustrated by the use of footnotes which deny the text of the narrative. Swift, in A Tale of the Tub (1710) adds his own footnotes:

This great work was entered upon some years ago, by one of our most eminent members: He began with The History of Reynard the Fox but neither lived to....

*The author seems here to be mistaken, for I have seen a Latin edition of Reynard the Fox above a hundred years old, which I take to be the original; for the rest it has been thought by many people to contain some satirical design on it.

In addition to these proposals by Stewart, other features of literary productions dissolve the boundaries between reality and fantasy, resetting new ones and emphasizing the fictive nature of the text. Stewart's concern is with humorous discourse, but earlier literature is more concerned with character, the conventions of 'the sensible man.'

B. Man, the Eternal Comic

Man is shown as incongruous to the society in which he lives. Whether he is good or bad is of little consequence; it is his unsociable state that makes him comic. Comic characters are complex in classical literature and range from Bergson's 'mechanical' (Tartuffe) to very human figures like Don Quixote. In the oldest comedy there was a struggle between the alazon (the Imposter) and the eiron (ironical man). The long history of the alazon goes back to Aristophanes' The Frogs (450 B.C.) in the character of Dionysius. Aristotle, in Nichomachean Ethics, defined the alazon as

'he who claims more than he has' and contrasts him with the 'mock-modest man', the eiron or self-deprecator. Throughout literary history, writers, both European and American, created their own versions of these comic characters. The alazon may be an uneducated braggart or an educated, professional boaster. The eiron may be a modest self-deprecator or a devastating satirist (Blair and Hill). As this chapter progresses, these characters will emerge. Before we move to the comic drama, it is useful to look at Wayne Booth's analysis of how a reader may interpret an author's intent.

C. The 'Reliable' Author

Wayne Booth (1961), in writing on the narrative methods of authors refers to the 'degree' and kind of distance that separates narrators from the author, the reader, and the other characters in the story. 'Reliable' narrators speak and act according to the norms of the implied author. The norms are either established or reinforced, and the reader must judge the characters in the light of those norms. When the narrator does not speak and act according to the implied author's norms, he becomes 'unreliable.' Booth suggests that narrators differ widely depending on how far they digress from their author's norms. The 'unreliable' narrator is not necessarily being deliberately untruthful, but is mistaken -- he believes that he possesses qualities which are denied to him by the author.

In Huck Finn 'the narrator claims to be naturally wicked while the author silently praises his virtues behind his back.' (p.159)

The indulgence in irony, a form of humor, and its potentially

delusive qualities in a sense creates a kind of 'unreliability.' But irony alone is not sufficient to make a narrator unreliable.

In some way all comic characters are unreliable. The successful reader is one who both detects and encourages the unreliability. In Tristram Shandy, the narrator presents the reader with a complex comic paradox. The story he professes to tell, the life of Tristram Shandy, could be told as a simple chronological narrative. Instead, Sterne has created a chaotic work contrasting, for the reader, the apparent simplicity with the actual complex work. The reader's confusion is only resolved when he sees the irony and the unreliability of the narrator, matching his norms for the comic novel to Sterne's.

D. The Comic Drama: the Universality of Techniques

Humor in the comic drama is much more easily recognized when, as the audience, one sees it unfold on the stage. Setting, costumes, gestures, facial expressions all help to make the drama continuous with the lifestyle. The play presents the incongruous aspects of human social life in speech, character, and conduct. The literary tradition of the comic drama is social criticism combined with broad caricature and verbal humor, drawn from the joke-telling tradition. Beginning with Aristophanes, this mode continues through the medieval, Renaissance, Restoration, and modern comedy.

Aristophanes

The Aristophanic tradition of comedy is the ridicule of Athenian social and political institutions and their leaders while advocating

the writer's own social and political ideas. His comedies are built around one fantastic idea conceived and carried out by the main character. In The Acharnians (425 B.C.), the main character conceives and carries out the fanciful notion of one man making peace with the enemy, abandoning successfully, the entire Athenian leadership. That done, he returns to his farm, while the Athenians and Spartans sink deeper into the miseries of war. Aristophanes' satire is sharp and biting driving his audience to understand the horrors and stupidity of war. He is the simple man mocking his betters.

Aristophanes plays with boundaries as he shifts from his own domain as writer to that of Dicaeopolis, his principal character. To the watching Athenians, Dicaeopolis' private peace with the Spartans is unthinkable, ludicrous, and therefore, comic. This breaking of the boundaries of accepted Athenian behavior points out both the alternative - fighting the Spartans and losing - and the impossible-to-conceive boundary breaking of Dicaeopolis' actions that are also ludicrous. Therefore, sane men don't go to war. This has the inevitability of the syllogism, the great Greek reasoning device.

The first mode, the Aristophanic, is an intellectual, analytical, and argumentative form, determined with the greatest clarity it can summon, to convince the audience of its thesis. (Merchant, 1972, p. 69)

Often caricaturing his contemporaries, Aristophanes' mocking of Euripedes' style of writing is contained in the following excerpt:

DI. Lord Zeus, whose eyes can pierce through everywhere, let me be dressed the loathliest way

I can. Euripedes, you have freely given the rags, now give, I pray you, what pertains to these, the Mysian cap to set upon my head. For I've today to act a beggar's part, to be myself, yet not to seem myself; the audience there will know me who I am, Whilst all the Chorus stand like idiots by, The while I fillip them with cunning words.

(The Acharnians, translation, 1924 p. 45)

The preoccupation with 'beggarly rags' parodies Euripedes' use of them in his plays (play note, p.41), while the reference to 'cunning words' was one of his favorite techniques. The incongruity of Aristophanes' plays is in their absurdity in the guise of reality (the empire in the air in The Birds), and the use of characters, widely burlesqued, taken from life. His castigation of Socrates lampoons the whole sophistic movement in one man, while his ridiculous portrayal of Euripedes strikes at all of the tragedians. It is all one vast joke on Athenian life garbed in the fictional robe.

The human tradition of Aristophanes and his contemporaries is to be found wherever social groups reflect on the mismatch of their aspirations and their human frailty. In the drama, before texts were produced to be read by anyone other than the actors, the audience and the author create the comic text by the social interaction made possible by the playhouse or the theatre. I have already referred to the 'multi-consciousness' of this kind of humor when speaking of the clown. Theatrical texts have a special kind of immediacy: they are particularly contemporary. Only the skill of the dramatist can keep a joke going over centuries, even until the day when children in school have to look up notes at the back of the

book in order to know exactly what made the earlier audience laugh. Nevertheless, the humor of Shakespeare, Moliere, Wilde and others has a quality of timelessness that make it important for a thesis, if only to show into what kind of tradition modern comic drama has to make its way.

Shakespeare

In As You Like It, Shakespeare reverses the tradition of the pastoral, a literary form that was made popular by his contemporary, Edmund Spenser in The Shepheardes Calendar(1579). By using this form, Shakespeare, as a dramatist, takes for granted a shared awareness of the contemporary world with his audience. The pastoral uses shepherds as characters and an idyllic rural life as setting; but the convention is artificial for neither the values nor the speech of the society pictured are rustic. The comic lies in the reversal of this world by the application of another kind of 'common-sense.' By adopting the pastoral convention, Shakespeare is also criticizing the notion that people overcome their difficulties by trying to escape them. This comic social criticism is enhanced by the internal linguistic play and is a source of shared fun with the audience to which we are no longer privy. Therefore, an explanation becomes necessary, eliminating for us, part of Shakespeare's joke.

Touchstone: 'For my part, I had rather bear with you than bear you. Yet I should bear no cross if I did bear you, for I think you have no money in your purse.' (II,4, lines 11-14)

The use of the word cross is a pun that plays upon the dual meaning of the word. Shakespeare's audience knew that old pennies had crosses on one side and so understood the play on words. A modern presentation would get over this textual problem by introducing mime or comic by-play.

Corin. 'And how like you this shepherd's life, Master Touchstone?'

Touchstone. 'Truly, shepherd, in respect of itself it is a good life; but in respect that it is a shepherd's life, it is naught. In respect that it is solitary, I like it very well; but in respect that it is private, it is a very mild life. Now, in respect that it is in the fields, it pleaseth me well; but in respect it is not in the court, it is tedious. As it is a spare life, look you, it fits my humor well; but as there is no more plenty in it, it goes much against my stomach.' (III,2, lines 13-22)

In the above quote, Shakespeare illustrates Stewart's reversal or inversion (in this case), an alternating denial of discourse by contradiction. Touchstone's self-contradictions mock the contradictory nature of the attempt to seek the ideal in pastoral life while trying to escape the courtly life. He is the critic of the contemporary world.

The presence of two settings and two alternative worlds (the court and the forest) are simultaneous actions, another play with boundaries. The narrative device of the subplot is one of Shakespeare's favorites and allows the viewing of more than one world at a time. Shakespeare uses Rosalind as a figure in both worlds: daughter to the banished Duke and the boy Ganymede, beginning in one world, moving into the ideal world of Arden, and moving back once again to the court. Her simultaneous identities create ludicrous confusion as she is loved both by Orlando and

Phebe. A series of matching and contrasting incongruities is created by the side-by-side existence of the court and the forest populated by the same characters using the same language and demonstrating the same manners. A more specific incongruity is achieved by the juxtaposition of the most ideal and the earthiest faces of love. In the center is the romantic love of Rosalind and Orlando surrounded by the comic variations of love in the pairing of Silvius and Phebe and Touchstone and Audrey. Of Silvius and Phebe we are told:

Corin. 'Mistress and master you have oft inquired
After the shepherd that complained of love,
Who you saw sitting by me on the turf
Praising the proud disdainful shepherdess
That was his mistress.'

Celia. 'Well, and what of him?'

Corin. 'If you will see a pageant truly play'd
Between the pale complexion of true love
And the red glow of scorn and proud disdain,
Go hence a little and I shall conduct you,
If you will mark it.' (III,4,lines 46-54)

Touchstone and Audrey, revealing the more comic love of the clown, participate in a relationship virtually devoid of sentiment. Touchstone, as the fool, is nonsensically disabled in anything he does, even when falling in love.

Touchstone. 'As the ox has his bow, sir, the
horse his curb, and the falcon her bells, so man
hath his desires; and as pigeons bill, so wedlock
would be nibbling.' (III,3, lines 76-79)

Shakespeare's play with words and meanings create language incongruities that are an integral part of the play's action.

Jaques.....'Thus we may see,', quoth he, 'how the
world wags.
'Tis but an hour ago since it was nine.
And after one hour more 'twill be eleven.
And so from hour to hour we ripe and ripe

And then from hour to hour we rot and rot
And thereby hangs a tale.' (II,7, lines
23-28)
(The pun lies in the Elizabethan pronunciation
of hour and whore identically. noted p. 110)

By using humorous discourse to frame his social satire, Shakespeare lets his audience in on his joke. Why, then, do we still find this funny if the jokes are hidden in the words which we cannot always understand? My view is that it is the generality of the human condition that still makes us laugh. The search for the ideal and the flight from conflict are still very much a part of modern society. It is far easier to run than it is to fight. Conflict between men who rule and men who would like to rule is an ongoing human reality. The romantic play between the sexes is timeless and its humor never grows stale. Men succumb to the wiles of women who make them believe that men are the aggressors. Strong women remain as popular as ever. All of these things are realities in every society. Through the use of linguistic play, Shakespeare shares his views with his contemporaries, people who share a common culture. We still laugh because the jokes are as pertinent as ever. The strengths and weaknesses of human nature continue to be relevant in every society.

Ben Jonson

While Shakespeare's texts represent the most skillful use of linguistic play presenting man's frailties in a benevolent manner, Ben Jonson's harsh caricatures leave nothing to the imagination. All manner of vices are represented by assorted characters, each

dominated by one overriding characteristic, or humor. It is this lack of balance in the characters that make them comic. Jonson, in the Aristophanic tradition of comedy, offers eccentric characters in a comic world. The excesses of the characters (hypocrisy, greed) give rise to comic situations. Volpone (1606), in the play's very first speech, illustrates the avaricious nature of the principal character.

Volpone: 'Good morning to the day; and next, my gold!
Open the shrine, that I may see my saint.
Hail the world's soul, and mine! More glad than is
The teeming earth to see the longed-for sun
Peep through the horns of the celestial Ram,
Am I, to view thy splendor darkening his;
(I,1, lines 1-6)

Volpone's worship of his gold, a reversal of values, clarifies his overriding characteristic, greed, and in this commonly held unbalance, creates the play's incongruity.

Two characters, Sir Politic Would-Be and his wife, Fine Madam Would-Be, are an intrusion into the world of Volpone. They are typically English in an Italian world, he a befuddled speculator who always loses, and she consumed with class and riches. Viewed beside the Italian manipulators the gross exaggerated characteristics of each are intensified.

Jonson, in a bitter social satire of the moral corruption of the men of his society, employs the acrostic, a play with language, his title taking on an added dimension that is created by the process of reading the text on the page.

V olpone, childless, rich, feigns sick, despairs,
O ffers his state to hopes of several heirs
L ies languishing; his Parasite receives

P resents of all, assures, deludes; then weaves
O ther cross-plots, which ope themselves are told
N ew tricks for safety are sought; they thrive;
 when bold,
E ach tempts th' other again, and all are sold

By directing the reader's attention vertically, Jonson redirects his attention to the shape of the print and adds a spacial dimension to the signification. Jonson's shift from poetry to prose (III,1) emphasizes form rather than content.

The inversion of animal and human categories (Stewart) depicts men as beasts of prey waiting to devour each other's flesh (fox, vulture, raven, crow, wolf). This confusion of classes brings a sense of nonsense into play as man's excesses turn him into beast. It is a vivid way to emphasize the inhuman way in which man conducts himself. Volpone extracts the riches of others while they, in turn, wait for him to die to seize his. The inversion creates an incongruity that is expanded through discourse and emphasizes man's follies.

Mosca: Keep you still, sir. Here is
Corbaccio.

Volpone: Set the plate away. The vulture's gone and
the raven's come. (I,1, lines 78-81)

Jonson, disgusted with social and moral corruption, concludes by assuring that his greedy characters are punished by the courts.

1st Avocatore:.....

When crimes are done and past, and to be punished,
To think what your crimes are. Away with them!
Let all that see these vices thus rewarded,
Take heart, and love to study 'em
Mischiefs feed,
Like beasts, till they be fat, and then they
bleed.
(V,7, lines 145-150)

Susan Stewart has helped to clarify the way in which traditional

comic writers use language to fashion humor. The humor is generated in a play with the actual text (author as narrator or character, the manipulation of text on the page, or a disruption of the conventional discourse in a given text) which then effects the way in which the reader interprets the text. The reader and the writer share a knowledge of the commonplace that is manipulated by the writer, creating a mismatch. The writer, in producing some form of incongruity, gives his audience his views of the society in which he lives. Thus far, all of the writers I have discussed have utilized some of the techniques Stewart describes in the comic drama. And, as I have previously proposed, some kind of an incongruity and a social awareness is incorporated in each humorous text. However, play with discourse alone cannot account for all of the humor in comic texts. The exaggeration of man's eccentricities in character delineation and the development of absurd situations also contribute strongly to my perception of a text as humorous. Therefore, while I offer Stewart's view of linguistic nonsense as an important contribution to understanding the comic text, I also offer my own view that both character and situational humor are as important as humorous discourse to the creation of humor in literature. Aristophanes, Shakespeare, and Jonson all combine social criticism with linguistic play and absurd characters and situations to formulate a timeless humor. We can still share with those writers an understanding of the human comedy, which, through generations, never changes. What does change is the way in which we look at it. As I continue with the comic drama, the characteristics that I have noted continue to emerge.

Molière

The devastating religious attack in Tartuffe (1664), a comedy of manners, aroused wide clerical opposition. Rejecting the Italian farces and comedies of intrigue so popular with his predecessors, Molière relied upon his observation of the follies and complexities of human nature and on his stunning skill in humorous presentations. His gallery of peasants, servants, nobleman, and bourgeois offers a wide view of the seventeenth century French. Molière's comic exposition of human character in Tartuffe is based on a single incongruity: religious hypocrisy. A laughing commentator of society akin to Jonson and the Aristophanic tradition of social satire, his satiric attack on man's excesses is at the same time of the seventeenth century and universal. He offers the moral that the wise man is both moderate and within the bounds of common sense. Molière's extreme exaggerations produce a gross imbalance of characterizations and tip the dimensions of discourse toward unreality. The sheer stupidity and gullibility of Mme. Pernelle, Orgon's mother, is magnified to the point where she is no longer believable and therefore, in the convention of the drama, comic.

The widely divergent opposites, Tartuffe, the hypocrite, and Orgon, the credulous fool, are the extreme comic characters and blatantly incongruous.

Org. ...I desire nothing more than to annoy people
and I wish her to be seen in your company at all
hours. Nor is this all: the better to defy them all
you shall be my sole heir, and I will go forthwith to

arrange in due form that the whole of my property
shall be yours.....(III,7)

This deviation from the norm is the heart of Molière's comic
characters.

.....carrying everyone's ridiculous traits to
grotesque extremes, without limiting himself to comic
types from the lower classes.....(Auerbach, 1953,
p. 364)

His treatment of social class is a departure from what one might
expect; the fools were not only from the lower classes but the
educated class as well. The servant as the wise commentator often
clarifies the problems and their solutions, the voice of commonsense.

Dor. Surely it is a scandalous thing to see a
stranger exercise such authority in this house;
to see a beggar, who, when he came, had not shoes
on his feet, and whose whole clothing may have
been worth twopence, so far forgot himself as to
interfere with everything, and play the master.
(I,1)

Playing with language to intensify divergence of character, Molière
uses Dorine's interjections to interrupt the discourse, a reversal
that stops the course of the play. The contrast between Orgon and
Dorine in their ballet of words points up the ludicrous exaggerated
behavior of Orgon and his daughter, Mariane.

Dor ...Sir, I do not believe it.
Org. I know how to make you believe it.
Dor. Yes, yes, you are telling us a funny
story.
Org. I am telling you exactly what you will
see shortly.
Dor. Nonsense!
Org. What I say is not in jest, daughter.
Dor. Come, do not believe your father; he is joking.
(II,2)

Both Jonson and Molière illustrate the social satire of the

sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, continuing a tradition begun by Aristophanes. Exaggeration of characterizations by both writers creates an imbalance that becomes comic. The later Elizabethans, and Molière, show their connection with Aristotle's 'Golden Mean' and the theory of the humors by pointing to moderation and good sense as the exemplary characteristics for life. Deviations become a target for the comic and man's incongruous attributes become the subject of social satire. In spite of the fact that the society about which each author wrote was best understood by the contemporary audience, we are still very much aware of the social criticism contained in each.

Oscar Wilde: The Importance of Being Earnest

Since my examples of great comic works are separated into the drama and the novel, it should be noted that I am not ignoring the eighteenth century, but have selected novels, not plays, from that period. To continue with the comic drama, I turn to Oscar Wilde who, like the Restoration dramatists, contributed a distinctive kind of comedy to the English stage.

Wilde's social farce has survived its time with good cause. Its witty dialogue, absurd situations, and devastating satire of the British upper-class is timeless, as constant new productions on professional and amateur stages make clear.

For,.....the fun depends on what the characters say, rather than on what they do. They speak a kind of beautiful nonsense - the language of high comedy, twisted into fantasy. What differentiates this farce from any other, is the humorous contrast between its style and matter.
(Beerblohm, 1953, p.189-90)

The ludicrous plot involving Jack Worthington, whose questionable background arises from his being found in a handbag at Victoria Station, leads to devious schemes involving imaginary people and complicated identity confusion. The caricatures of Wilde's society are lethal. The characters are at once vapid and vain, each mouthing absurdities reminiscent of the Restoration comedies of manners.

Algernon. That is a great disappointment.

I am obliged to go up by the first train on Monday morning. I have a business appointment that I am anxious.....to miss?

Cecily. Couldn't you miss it anywhere but in London?

Algernon No, the appointment is in London.
(II, p.247)

Algernon. If I am occasionally a little over-dressed, I make up for it by being always being immensely over-educated.

(II, p. 255)

Wilde is not above using the language pun to create comedy as in the double use of the homonyms earnest/Ernest. Play on meaning is throughout.

Jack. My dear Algy, you talk exactly as if you were a dentist. It is very vulgar to talk like a dentist when one isn't a dentist. It produces a false impression. (I, p.221)

Gwendolen.....Cecily, Mamma, whose views on education are remarkably strict, has brought me up to be extremely short-sighted; it is part of her system; so do you mind my looking at you through my glasses? (II, p.256)

The paradoxical epigrams uttered by his characters provide an additional stroke of the rapier Wildean wit.

Algernon. You don't seem to realize, that in married life three is company and two is none. (I, p. 225)

Lady Bracknell..... I do not approve of anything that tampers with natural ignorance. Ignorance is like a delicate exotic fruit; touch it and the bloom is gone. The whole theory of modern education is radically unsound. Fortunately in England, at any rate, education produces no effect whatsoever. It if did, it would prove a serious danger to the upper classes, and probably lead to acts of violence in Grosvenor Square. (I, p. 233)

Wilde's absurd fictive world is heightened by his use of mistaken identities, inane conversation, and vacant characters. His world is comically askew with what constitutes everyday life and his clever use of a banal topic turns ordinary dialogue into nonsense. The upper class, and its flaws and follies, is not the only group to come under Wilde's scrutiny. The clergy is ignominiously represented by Reverend Chasuble and the nannies by the most irresponsible Miss Prism, the very one who left Ernest in the handbag.

Chasuble. Your brother Ernest dead?

Jack Quite dead.

Miss Prism. What a lesson for him! I trust he will profit by it.

(II, p. 249)

Chasuble.....My sermon on the meaning of the manna in the wilderness can be adapted to almost any occasion, joyful, or, as in the present case, distressing. (all sigh) I have preached it at harvest celebrations, christenings, confirmations, on days of humiliation and festal days. The last time I delivered it was in the Cathedral, as a charity sermon on behalf of the Society for the Prevention of Discontent among the Upper Orders. The Bishop, who was present, was much struck by some of the analogies I drew.' (II, p. 250)

Wilde's classic farce is distinguished by his blending of the

comical and the absurd, clever incongruous dialogue, and perceptive social satire in the literary tradition of Molière, Congreve, and Sheridan.

Tom Stoppard

While Wilde offers exaggerated characters in the manner of Jonson to expose what he views as the flaws in his society, Tom Stoppard uses the parody of a classic drama to comment on the futility he sees in the life of his twentieth century society. Stoppard distorts the conventions of the drama in order to show the absurdity of the human lives his characters represent. There is a feeling of purposelessness, a view of man's existence as pointless.

In Rosencrantz and Guildenstern Are Dead, a parody of Hamlet, Stoppard uses Rosencrantz and Guildenstern as absurd clowns making nonsense with their directionless meanderings and pointless conversations. As in Hamlet itself, the boundaries between the real and the fictional are broken and reset by the use of the play within a play. Stoppard extends the break further by creating yet another sphere of action with Rosencrantz and Guildenstern existing in a ludicrous world of their own as well as in Hamlet's and the tragedians' worlds. This use of contiguous subplots (simultaneity) allows the reader to wander back and forth exploring each, side-by-side. The thin line between life and art is magnified by the role-playing indulged in not only by the actors, but by Hamlet, who feigns madness, and Rosencrantz and Guildenstern who vacillate from one position to another, never sure who they are and where they

are going. The denial of time and space forces a suspension of reality and an immersion in the world of fiction, at once clarifying the existence of each. The comic, in Stoppard, is achieved thematically by an ambiguity of text, an open-ended frame, a 'deficiency of signification.' It is done through setting as well as gaps in dialogue.

Act I: Two Elizabethans passing the time in a place without any visible character.
(p7)

Act I: Guil. gets up but has nowhere to go. He spins another coin over his shoulder without looking at it, his attention being directed at his environment or lack of it. (p.8)

Ros. Nevertheless, I suppose one might say that his was a chance.....One might well.....accost him.....Yes, it definitely looks like a chance to me....Something on the lines of a direct informal approach.....man to man.....straight from the shoulder.....Now look here, what's it all about.....sort of thing. Yes. Yes, this looks like one to be grabbed with both hands, I should say.....if I were asked....No point in looking at a gift horse till you see the whites of its eyes, etcetcera.....(II, p. 55)

Constantly contradicting themselves, the characters resort to reversals through dialogue. Rosencrantz and Guildenstern are a pair of opposites, the words of each negating the other's.

Guil: What's your name when you're at home?

Ros: What's yours?

Guil: When I'm at home?

Ros: Is it a different home?

Guil: What home?

Ros: Haven't you got one?

Guil: Why do you ask?

Ros: What are you driving at?

Guil: What's your name?
(I, p. 33)

Contradicting himself, Rosencrantz's words cause the text to fluctuate and in so doing flaunt its detachment from the context of everyday life. In addition, the relationship to what went before is ambivalent and we are left without form or structure.

Ros: The position as I see it, then. That's west unless we're off course, in which case it's night; the king gave me the same as you, the king never gave me the letter, the king gave you the letter, we don't know what's in the letter; we take Hamlet to the English king, it depending on when we get there who he is, and we hand over the letter, which may or may not have something in it to keep us going, and if not, we are finished and at loose ends, if they have loose ends. We could have done worse. I don't think we missed any chances.....Not that we're getting much help. (III, p. 84)

Discourses can be denied structurally and Stoppard, by moving Rosencrantz and Guildenstern from one sphere of action to another is denying the real existence of all of them. Numerous stage directions exemplify the absurdity of the play.

(When the point has been well made and more so)
A better light - Lantern? Moon?.....Light.)
(III, p. 74)

(Rosencrantz inhales with expectation,
exhales with boredom.) (III, p.75)

Linguistically, Stoppard makes nonsense by taking a familiar literary form and changing the words, thereby moving away from the realistic into the fictive. The prayer 'Give us this day our daily bread' becomes:

Give us this day our daily mask, (I, p. 30)
Give us this day our daily week. (I, p. 34)
Give us this day our daily round. (II, p. 71)
Give us this day our daily tune. (III, p. 86)

The substituted words create an added absurdity since they are ludicrous and totally removed from what constitutes prayer.

Stoppard's illogical piece of theatre gives us a sense of unrelatedness to the world and a purposelessness of experience that leaves man aimless and absurd.

Comic drama is distinctive because, although it isn't face to face, like camera and audience, it isn't the reader alone with the text either. To some extent, we have the clown in a context with verbal humor added. We watch illogical man illustrate his difficulty in coping with society's demands.

My selection of comic novels will show how the dominant themes of the comic drama continue in the novel: social satire, including the criticism of man and the society in which he lives. On one hand, man is self-oriented, has empty values, is class conscious and generally disinterested in the world around him. On the other hand, the author implies, is the kind, unselfish man balancing life's evils. The commonality of man's positive and negative qualities is stressed. In order to get his point across, a writer depends upon a sharing of a common set of values with his reader. Thus each era of literature is most relevant to those living at the time of the writing. Humorous books are even more pertinent to contemporary readers because once the 'joke' has to be explained, in succeeding generations, some of the humor is lost. Classic comic writers, such as those whose works I am examining, in their use of language play and comically incongruous characters and situations have created

narratives that survive the generations even though some of the social 'jokes' are not clear. The writer transcends the lack of social awareness of his readers and the humor is maintained because, through the ages, man is unchanged. The human condition is constant. The comic novel, like the drama, is part of the literary cultural heritage that preserves the tradition of looking at man in his society. Children inherit it through the oral traditions of the clown, and radio, television, and film comedies before they have any idea of its history in literature. It is because of this connection with children and their books that we are looking back in the literary history to find common themes. We have found that the absurdities of man lie in the way he adapts to his society. These themes persist and children come to know them in the material that is presented to them to read or to see on the stage, in films or on television. I shall return to these themes again.

E. Great Comic Narrators

When a writer 'plays with boundaries,' he, in some way, breaks the traditional mode of the genre in which he writes. The reader expects the writer to tell a story, whether in prose or poetry, related to the 'real' world, and when the writer disrupts that story with digressions from the main theme, incongruous settings for the characters, or characters who seem incompatible with the setting, comedy is the result. While the comic dramatist uses both the auditory and the visual to get his point across, the comic novelist must create his humor through the text alone. It is my contention

that through the use of characters, situations, and discourse, the writer plays with the traditional textual boundaries and creates a humorous work. Comic discourse results when the writer speaks directly to the reader abandoning his role as narrator and taking on the role of implied author or commentator. This kind of discourse generates a direct comic picture. Other writers, in a much more distant kind of writing, force the reader to read beneath the printed page to see the irony in what they say. Conspicuous mocking of man through parody and satire is a direct kind of comic discourse. All comic writers evaluate life, as they know it, in some manner.

Chaucer: Canterbury Tales

By choosing a pilgrimage as a story frame, Chaucer was able to bring together representatives of many of the various class types of the England of his time: a whole range of intellectual and social examples are depicted. In addition, many types of medieval literature are represented: chivalric romance, beast-epic, courtly lay (short narrative poem using material from the fabliau), the legend, the sermon, and the realistic fabliau. The French fabliau is a short story for and about the lower classes, a widely used narrative in medieval Europe. It is often bawdy or obscene, the humor arising from the plot which is usually about an intrigue or a practical joke. Standard characters are the stupid husband, the unfaithful wife, and the clever rogue: all are found in the Miller's Tale.

Chaucer chooses the framework of the courtly love romance for the story of the carpenter and his wife. The incongruity of the realism in which he describes the characters, and their antics, and the high-toned style of the telling creates the comic parody of the poem. Chaucer contrasts the traditional courtly manners of Absolon with the sensuality of the lovers.

....'What are you doing, honeycomb, sweet Alison, my pretty bird, my sweet cinnamon? Wake up, darling love, and speak to me! Too little do you think of me in my distress, which for love of you pains me wherever I am. It is no wonder that I faint and suffer, craving like a lamb for the teat'.....

Next he draws together crude gestures and the spoken style of the romantic tradition.

Now, good people all, it so happened that one day this charming Nicholas, as students will do in their special and naughty way, started to get fresh and fool around with the young wife whilst her husband was away on business at Oseney. He grabbed at her crotch, exclaiming, 'My dearest, I will be destroyed by my hunger to love you unless I can have what I desire!' He held her tight by the buttocks and cried out, 'My dearest, let me love you now or, God save me, I will be done for!'

The collision of form and content produces the criticism of excess in both the language and manners of the 'amour courtois' tradition. Chaucer's characters are humanly real, all the more so for being set in a literary style that is 'above' them. The humor in the characters lies in their ridiculous discourse, incongruous to their coarse behavior.

Rabelais

Like Chaucer, Rabelais derives his comic effects from a mixture

of types and genres. The purity of the courtly love romance is contaminated by the appearance, with it, of lowly farce. Gargantua and Pantagruel is a fantastic satire of contemporary life and chivalric romance written as the history of two gigantic kings. Rabelais satirizes the contemporary French scene by creating, in Pantagruel's mouth, an absurd replica of the real world. He has reproduced a fully developed society in which life proceeds just as it did in his native France.

The most astonishing and most absurd thing about this Gorgiasian world is precisely that it is not entirely different from ours but on the contrary resembles it in the minutest detail; it is superior to ours in that it knows of our world whereas we know nothing of it, but otherwise it is exactly like it.....(Auerbach, pp.270-71)

The juxtaposition of minute details from Rabelais' world and the world in Pantagruel's mouth is comically absurd. The plague which raged in France during the years 1532 and 1533 is raging in the depth of Pantagruel's mouth and attributed to the waves of garlic emanating from his stomach. His teeth are compared to a mountain landscape and harbor both a beautiful, idyllic world and one of darkness and crime. This exaggeration of details is a surplus of signification and the result is the reduction of size until a miniaturization of the world is reduced to fit in its entirety into Pantagruel's mouth. The exaggeration of dimensions, and the miniature world in Pantagruel's mouth as opposed to the gigantic dimensions of the world of Pantagruel himself intermingle pointing up the absurdities of the real world.

The multiple interpretation of the text is a surplus of

signification, that is, we can be conscious of more than the text really says. By simultaneously presenting us with the author's world, Pantagruel's world, and the world in Pantagruel's mouth, Rabelais heightens our awareness of the ways in which discourse is distorted.

Rabelais' play with language encompasses the play-on-words, synonyms, euphemisms, puns, and neologisms that reflect his delight in linguistic humor. One whole chapter (I, 11) is devoted to a parody of proverbs and conventional cliches systematically reversed and/or disobeyed: he struck while the iron was cold, put the cart before the horse, looked a gift horse in the mouth (Hornstein et al, 1956).

As in Chaucer, Rabelais' burlesque of the foibles of man are classic examples of literary humor. Man's follies are a continuing human element that make these old comic texts funny, even to modern man. The ability to laugh at ourselves, is, after all, what makes life tolerable. A significant part of the fun in reading classical comic works is the underlying knowledge that man has not changed all that much. He is still delighting in the taboo, revelling in his sexuality, and attempting to survive society's demands. He is, and has always been, the clown, stumbling through life the best way that he can.

Cervantes

The persistence of the parody of courtly love romance and its realistic counterpart remains in Don Quixote. The incongruities

apparent in the relationship between Don Quixote and Sancho and between Don Quixote and Dulcinea create paradoxes: Don Quixote, the dreamer, the idealist, and Sancho, the practical and realist, juxtaposed with Don Quixote, the courtly knight, and Dulcinea, the crude, rudely spoken peasant girl. The humor is implicit in the theme of a medieval knight in a modern world and enhanced by verbal by-play and mock-heroic parody. The pairing of incongruous types to create a humorous setting has been a continuing presence in comic works of fiction and indeed the entire world of comedy.

...Two partners who appear together as contrasting comic or semi-comic figures represent a very old motif which has retained its effectiveness even today in farce, caricature, the circus, and the film:.....(Auerbach, p.353)

For the reader of Don Quixote, the multi-consciousness is in the madman, who is both mad and wise, knightly and pitiable, bordering on the tragic, and at the same time, buoyant and merry.

...There are levels of tone represented here which one is accustomed to finding in purely comic contexts. A fool is a fool. We are used to seeing him represented on a single plane. ...But what are we to say of a fool who is at the same time wise, with that wisdom which seems the least compatible with folly, that is, the wisdom of intelligent moderation? (Auerbach, p.349-50)

The madness of Don Quixote serves to point up the contrasts existing between the realistic and illusory worlds. To Sterne, his gentleness served as a model for Yorick, a kind and simple clown.

I have the highest idea of the spiritual and refined sentiments of this reverend gentleman, from this single stroke in his character, which I think comes up to any of the honest refinements of the peerless knight of La Mancha, whom, by the bye, with all his follies, I love more, and would actually have gone further to have paid a visit to, than the greatest

hero of antiquity. (Tristram Shandy, p.58)

Don Quixote is about idealism and innocence as humor. The eternal comic theme is man's tendency to attribute grandeur to and mix up literature and life. By idealizing courtly love until the hero, Don Quixote, becomes a clown, the author creates a comedy. This 'holy fool,' so popular in American fiction, and previously discussed in my analysis of the clown figure, will appear once again in my analysis of humor in the American literary tradition. The clown figure, in its unmalicious exaggeration of man's follies, appeals to children as an endearing comic figure. It is this endearing quality that appealed also to Sterne, moving him to model the parson, Yorick, after Don Quixote. In addition to characterizations that survive and become part of the comic tradition, discourse also survives. The phrase 'hitting at windmills' moved into the language after the English began to read Cervantes. The phrase refers to Don Quixote's imaginary adversaries (actually windmills) whom he viewed as armed giants. Sterne saw the eternal human foibles of Don Quixote (man) made tolerable by incongruous behavior.

Laurence Sterne

In his novel, Tristram Shandy, beginning anywhere and ending nowhere, Sterne uses 'play with infinity' which refers to some manipulation of the conventional boundaries of text. In literature, we normally expect a text to have a beginning, a body, and an ending, in that order. Texts that deviate from this expected hierarchy of events play with common sense expectations, making them

incongruous and therefore, comic. Sterne, in Tristram Shandy, revealed a whole new concept of form in fiction, in a sense, making time stand still. On the surface, a rambling series of anecdotes, reflections, parodies, and dialogues, Sterne's novel is in reality, a sensitive illustration of the idiosyncracies of the human mind. Sterne knew well what he was doing, deliberately shunning chronological order, perhaps because he understood that the past exists in present consciousness and clock-marked time does not really apply to the time of man's experiences. Sterne takes Locke's 'association of ideas' theme to a ludicrous extreme making it impossible for the story to progress. There are simply too many things leading to too many others. The book contains numerous references to those works that Sterne admired: Gargantua and Pantagruel and Don Quixote, thereby linking itself with the comic tradition in its classical form. The twisting, ever-expanding story of Tristram Shandy, with its long, sometimes tedious digressions, timeless and motionless, owes much to Pantagruel and Don Quixote. Learning from Rabelais and Cervantes, Sterne combines remarkable fragments of erudition with fantastic and nonsensical elements achieving a kind of parody of pedantry.

Sterne's obsession with minute details turns ordinary life experiences into comic events. The interminable birth of Tristram is filled with absurd discussion about the various birth positions of the fetus and the manner of its delivery. Tristram's haphazard rather Freudian life story focuses upon prenatal influences and dwells on his traumatic forceps delivery, circumcision by a window

sash, and his bizarre experiences with assorted relatives. Sexual themes are embedded throughout the book on multiple levels. One is through character, where both Tristram and Toby suffer injuries that allude to impotence. Another uses the nose as a metaphor for phallus beginning with the crushing of Tristram's nose at birth, and continuing in 'Slawkenbergius' Tale' (a parody of Don Quixote), where the size and appearance of Diego's nose and his implied inability to perform sexually create a paradox between reality and illusion. Incidents such as Trim's encounter with Beguine illustrate.

The fair Beguine, said the corporal, continued rubbing with her whole hand under my knee - till I feared her zeal would weary her - "I would do a thousand times more," said she, "for the love of Christ" - In saying which she passed her hand across the flannel, to the part above my knee, which I had equally complained of, and rubbed it also.

(Sterne, p.543)

The comic theme of sex that I referred to in Chaucer continues in Sterne. His view of man as absurd is illustrated by the absurdity of his sexual behavior: even at the very moment of Tristram's procreation, Mrs. Shandy asks her husband if he has wound the clock.

Pray, my dear. quoth my mother, have you not forgot to wind up the clock? --- Good G-! cried my father, making an exclamation, but taking care to moderate his voice at the same time, - Did ever woman, since the creation of the world, interrupt a man with such a silly question?

(Sterne, p.42)

Sterne's innuendoes are not in the bawdy style of Chaucer or Rabelais, but are made to illustrate human absurdity.

Textual humor is devised by Sterne's use of typographical and stylistic eccentricities such as dots, dashes, asterisks, one

sentence chapters, and unfinished sentences contributing to the sense of timelessness. His 'play' message is communicated by Stewart's 'deficiency of signification.' This technique forces a text to be made ambiguous by breaking its frame or refusing to enclose the frame of the text.

.....Because, continued Dr. Slop, (turning to my father) as positive as these old ladies generally are,--'tis a point very difficult to know,--and yet of the greatest consequence to be known;--because, Sir, if the hip is mistaken for the head,--there is a possibility(if it is a boy) that the forceps..... (Sterne, p.204)

From John Locke, Sterne learned that the consciousness of each individual is dependent upon his personal train of association, and, every man, in a sense, lives in a world of his own with his own 'hobby horse'(as Sterne calls a man's private obsession).

A man and his Hobby-Horse, though I cannot say that they act and react exactly after the same manner in which the soul and body do upon each other: Yet doubtless there is a communication between them of some kind, and my opinion rather is, that there is something in it more of the manner of electrified bodies,--and by means of the heated parts of the rider, which come immediately into contact with the back of the Hobby-Horse.....--so that if you are able to give but a clear description of the nature of the one, you may form a pretty exact notion of the genius and character of the other.

(Stern, p.105)

Uncle Toby's hobby horse is his love of the military and its concrete symbol, the fort, Tristram's is the book he is writing, and Walter has several: his belief in reason and his theory of names. Like Cervantes' 'windmills', Sterne's 'hobby horse' has become part of the English language.

The stylistic and linguistic modes of Tristram Shandy (as can

easily be seen) are timeless. The exaggeration of the eccentricities of the characters creates caricatures of real people dominated by their excesses and absurd in their demeanor. Tristram's hodge-podge of a history marked by a disrupted chain of events and tales is an absurdly comical paradox. Sterne is at once the moralist and the clown. His digressions not only determine the humorous and moral scope of the text, but keep the tone intimate by moving back and forth among different parts of the book. The asterisks and gaps in the text that are left for the reader to interpret and fill in as he wishes draw the reader into the book making him a conspirator with the writer. The reader comes to understand that, even though he knows how stories are framed, each one can go another, unexpected way breaking the conventional rules of writing.

Thus far I have been talking about novels and the way in which they are made comic. Cervantes, Rabelais, and Sterne created comic novels by breaking the traditional rules of story. Rejecting the neatly framed narrative form, all three authors present massive works of timeless themes, at once confusing and frustrating the reader, while forcing him to collaborate with the writer in his comic creation. All three writers exaggerate characterizations in order to draw attention to man's comic incongruities, and, all three offer social criticism of life as they knew it. By accentuating the follies of man, as did the comic dramatists, they created works that continue to appeal to succeeding generations. The point to be made about the primary technique used by Cervantes, Rabelais, and Sterne

is the incongruous shaping of discourse which is the predominant source of humor in the texts.

I move now to a different kind of technique, one in which irony points up the tensions between impulse and convention and between personal morality and social propriety. It is the technique of Jane Austen whose controlled and polished wit mocked the manners and morals of the landed middle-classes as she knew them. We shall still see eccentric characters engaging in ludicrous activities, but the discourse is far more difficult to comprehend. Relying on the reader's ability to share her sharp wit and to appreciate her mocking tone, Austen raises the discourse of the humorous text to a new level. The irony becomes clear when the reader shares the author's value system.

Jane Austen

The appreciation of Jane Austen's comic writing is achieved only when the reader comes to understand that her characters do not mean what they say. It is only by reading beneath the page that one comes to appreciate her complex satirical wit. Critical of the contemporary novels of her day, Austen satirizes the Gothic in Northanger Abbey, mocking not only the novels, but their readers as well. The standard heroine of Gothic novels is virtuous, romantic, refined, and well-versed in music and drawing. In Catherine Morland, Austen reverses these traits and presents a heroine who is, above all, truthful, guileless, and imperfect. Accentuating Catherine's traits is Isabelle Thorpe, her antithesis, a prototype

of the Gothic heroine. Yet when Catherine finally reaches Northanger Abbey her anti-heroic character is transformed into the true Gothic heroine, creating an incongruous characterization. By reversing Catherine's character and forcing the reader to redefine his analysis, the fictive world, flawed and unreal, is accentuated.

This is strange indeed! I did not expect such a sight as this!--An immense heavy chest!--What can it hold!--Why should it be placed here?--Pushed back too, as if it meant to be out of sight!--I will look into it--cost me what it may, I will look into it--and directly too--by daylight--If I stay till evening my candle may go out.....
(Ch.21.p.169)

Inserting herself as author into the text, Austen comments on the literature she ridicules and disrupts the narrative, thereby creating a break in the conventional rules of story.

The advantages of natural folly in a beautiful girl have been already set forth by the capital pen of a sister author;--and to her treatment of the subject I will only add in justice to men, that though to the larger and more trifling part of the sex, imbecility in females is a great enhancement of their personal charms, there is a portion of them too reasonable and too well informed themselves to desire any thing more in woman than ignorance. (Ch.14,p.125)

Austen criticizes novel readers through her characters, not for the choice of books but for the way in which they are read. Both Henry and Catherine avidly read the Gothics, but unlike Catherine, Henry enjoys them, refusing to take them seriously.

'The person, be it gentleman or lady, who has not pleasure in a good novel, must be intolerably stupid. I have read all Mrs. Radcliffe's works, and most of them with great pleasure. The Mysteries of Udolpho, when I had once begun it, I could not lay down again;--I remember finishing it in two days--my hair standing on end the whole time.'
(Ch.14,p.121)

Austen criticizes readers who fail to separate fantasy from reality, and it is this fault that leads Catherine into trouble at the Abbey. This confusion between fantasy and reality is another way of mocking the current literary fad of reading the Gothic novel. Henry, who firmly separates the two, teases Catherine with a description of what lies ahead at his family home.

He smiled, and said, 'You have formed a very favorable idea of the abbey.'

'To be sure I have. Is not it a fine old place, just like what one reads about?'

'And are you prepared to encounter all the horrors that a building such as "what one reads about" may produce? Have you a stout heart?--Nerves fit for sliding panels and tapestry?'

'Oh! yes--I do not think I should be easily frightened, because there would be so many people in the house--and besides, it has never been uninhabited and left deserted for years, and then the family come back to it unawares, without giving any notice, as generally happens.'.....

(Ch.20,p.164)

Henry is the author's spokesman, casting a realistic eye about, and well versed in what is fact and what is fiction. How does the reader know that Austen is mocking Catherine through Henry? It becomes evident when she speaks directly to the reader, ridiculing Catherine's expectations based on her reading of Mrs. Radcliffe's Gothic novels.

Charming as were all Mrs. Radcliffe's works, and charming even as were the works of all her imitators, it was not in them perhaps that human nature, at least in the midland counties of England, was to be looked for.

(Chapter 25,p.202)

With an ironic social awareness and a fine sense of caricature, Austen parodies the literary fashion of her day.

Charles Dickens

In Pickwick Papers, we are made aware of the continuing traditions of the comic novel. Centering most of his humor on a group of amiable eccentrics and their lively comic dialogue, Dickens takes his characters through a series of absurd incidents. Central to the farcical disputes and comic sketches are Mr. Pickwick and Sam Weller, two opposites in experience and temperament whose comic adventures emphasize their individual traits. The gentle, rotund Mr. Pickwick, naive and inexperienced, is led from innocence to enlightenment by the Cockney Sam, cheerful and knowledgeable, and accepting of all life has to offer. Sam introduces Mr. Pickwick to the world of poverty as he knows it, and this improbable pairing creates a comic incongruity.

'Service, sir,' exclaimed Sam. 'You may say that. Arter I run away from the carrier, and afore I took up with the wagginer, I had unfurnished lodgin's for a fortnight.'

"Unfurnished lodgings?" said Mr. Pickwick.

'Yes - the dry arches of Waterloo Bridge. Fine sleeping-place - within ten minutes' walk of all the public offices - only if there is any objection to it, it is that the sitivation's rayther too airy. I see some queer sights there.'

(Chapter 16,p.290)

Comic incidents, usually involving Mr. Pickwick, abound. His simplicity and benevolence, the innocent and gullible fool, which lead him to expect similar behavior from others, lead to a series of misadventures. He finds himself trapped in a young ladies' seminary amid shrieks and wails. His entrance into this very improbable setting is achieved somewhat unceremoniously.

.....the immediate effect of his assistance was to jerk that immortal gentleman completely over the wall onto the bed beneath, where, after crushing three gooseberry bushes and a rose-tree, he finally alighted at full length.....(Chapter 16, p. 300)

Dickens plays with the narrative form by failing to punctuate, producing an undefined mass of discourse.

...Here, No. 924, take your fare, and take yourself off - respectable gentleman - know him well - none of your nonsense - this way, sir, - where's your friends?.....(Chapter 2, p. 77)

The interruption of the narrative with individual's poems and tales causes a gap in the text that breaks the conventional form of the narrative. The reader is jarred from his course and perceives the limits of the text in signifying reality (The Convict's Return, Chapter 6, The Stroller's Tale, Chapter 3, The Bagman's Tale, Chapter 14). The intrusion of the author as narrator is an additional disruption of the traditional account of story.

It is the fate of most men who mingle with life, to make many real friends, and lose them in the course of nature. It is the fate of all authors or chroniclers to create imaginary friends, and lose them in the course of art(Chapter 57, p. 896)

Dickens' sense of the comic lies not only in the behavior of Mr. Pickwick and his friends as they react to different environments, but in his stream of social satire. The English scene with its electioneering, political journalism, law and lawyers are all characterized with rich comic effect. However, the humor in Pickwick Papers depends upon eccentricity, and, in order to recognize this exaggeration of human qualities, the reader must have a firm understanding of the ordinary behavior expected. It is as I

proposed previously, nonsense depends upon the commonplace. By combining caricature with playful discourse, Dickens continues in the comic tradition of the novel.

Thackeray: Vanity Fair

In the opening to his novel, 'Before the Curtain,' Thackeray immediately makes us aware of the multi-consciousness the reader must assume: author as commentator, author as storyteller. We encounter a humorist and satirist who watches the world with ironic amusement. His characters are puppets who, at his will, move through their paces without heart, for puppets are but wooden toys who cannot feel. The character description is negative; they are 'yokels, bullies, knaves, light-fingered folk.' We are introduced to a world of heartless, dishonest people, as Thackeray notes, 'more melancholy than mirthful.' We are also watching for a cast of characters whose faces change in public and private.

Look at the faces of the actors and buffoons when they come off from their business; and Tom Fool washing the paint off his cheeks before he sits down to dinner with his wife and the little Jack Puddings behind the canvas. The curtain will be up presently, and he will be turning over head and heels, and crying, 'How are you?' (Before the Curtain)

And having prepared us for the 'fair,' the Manager professes to retire. But having retired as Manager, he intrudes on our consciousness at another level: as author whose novel is 'accompanied by appropriate scenery and brilliantly illuminated with the author's own candles.' The puppeteer heightens our awareness of his presence as he continually manipulates his puppets.

Everything considered, I think it is quite as well for our dear Amelia Sedley, in Russell Square, that Miss Sharp and she are parted. Rebecca is a droll funny creature, to be sure; and those descriptions of the poor lady weeping for the loss of her beauty, and the gentleman 'with hay-coloured whiskers and straw-coloured hair,' are very smart, doubtless, and show a great knowledge of the world. That she might, when on her knees, have been thinking of something better than Miss Horrocks's ribbons, has possibly struck both of us. But my kind reader will please to remember that this history has 'Vanity Fair' for a title, and that Vanity Fair is a very vain, wicked, foolish place, full of all sorts of humbugs and falsenesses and pretensions. (Chapter 8, p. 116)

After Becky's letter to Amelia, in which her descriptions of Sir Pitt's house and its occupants sting with satirical wit, the author interjects to inform us that this is Vanity Fair, full of folly and wickedness. He will only tell the truth as he sees it whether comical or villainous.

I warn my 'kyind friends,' then, that I am going to tell a story of harrowing villainy and complicated - but, as I trust, intensely interesting - crime. My rascals are no milk-and-water rascals, I promise you. When we come to the proper places we won't spare fine language - No, no! But when we are going over the quiet country we must perforce be calm. A tempest in a slop-basin is absurd. We will reserve that sort of thing for the mighty ocean and the lonely midnight. The present Chapter is very mild. Others - but we will not anticipate those.

The incongruities of the novel lie in the opposed characters: Becky and Amelia, Osborne and Dobbin. Each has flaws, but their extremes, their unbalanced natures, create an incongruous picture. Amelia's weakness is alluded to throughout the book, but it is only at the very end, when Dobbin declares his intent to abandon her that we see her through his eyes.

.....No, you are not worthy of the love which I have devoted to you. I knew all along that the prize I had

set my life on was not worth the winning; that I was a fool, with fond fancies, too, bartering away my all of truth and ardour against your little feeble remnant of love. I will bargain no more: I withdraw. I find no fault with you. You are very good-natured, and have done your best; but you couldn't - you couldn't reach up to the height of the attachment which I bore you, and which a loftier soul than yours might have been proud to share. Good-bye, Amelia! (Chapter 66, p. 776)

Becky continues throughout as the true comic character: she is unburdened by morality and relies on her wits to carry her through. She is a cool, unprincipled, selfish girl whose only object is to rise in the world from her obscure and poverty-ridden origins. As she was at the start of the tale, she was at the end.

...She had previously made a respectful virgin-like curtsey to the gentleman, and her modest eyes gazed so perseveringly on the carpet that it was a wonder how she should have found an opportunity to see him....(Chapter 3, p. 56)

Emmy, her children, and the Colonel, coming to London sometime back, found themselves suddenly before her at one of these fairs. She cast down her eyes demurely and smiled as they started away from her; (Chapter 67, p. 797)

Throughout Thackeray plays with boundaries as he moves from the world of Becky and Amelia to his world, as author, and as social commentator. His bitter, satiric study of the upper and middle classes of English life intrudes throughout. On Sir Pitt:

Vanity Fair - Vanity Fair! Here was a man who could not spell, and did not care to read - who had the habits and the cunning of the boor: whose aim in life was pettifogging: but who never had a taste, or emotion, or enjoyment, but what was sordid and foul; and yet he had rank, and honors, and power, somehow:..... (Chapter 9, p. 123)

And on the 'best' people:

Here, before long, Becky received not only 'the best' foreigners (as the phrase in our noble and admirable society slang), but some of the best English people too. I don't mean the most virtuous, or indeed the least virtuous, or the cleverest, or the stupidest, or the richest, or the best born, but 'the best'--(Chapter 51, p. 586)

Thackeray's mocking caricatures of nineteenth century England paint a greedy and pompous world relieved only by the true humility of Dobbin.

In each of my selections, the author offers a different view of man's unbalanced nature. It is the incongruous extreme to which we are exposed while each author creates his individual appraisal of society, sharing with the reader the common 'joke' of the day. Caricature, odd situations and linguistic play all combine to offer a link with the past. Yet each author has his special style and how does the reader learn how to read those traditional techniques for making humor? It is, I think, the eternal human condition. Man is, and has always been, imprudent and fraught with feelings of internal insecurity. Dickens' innocent Mr. Pickwick and Thackeray's wily Becky are poles apart, yet each represents an exaggerated departure from what we have come to expect as 'normal,' balanced behavior. We learn early to read simple closed narratives and so come to expect a conventional form when we begin a work of fiction. Then, as each writer uses techniques whereby he breaks the conventional fictional boundaries, whether through discourse, characters, or situations, readers learn how to read funny books. Learning how humor 'means' begins in childhood and grows as comic works become more complicated and require more experience. By the time the reader has

experienced many comic novels he will have learned the ways in which writers 'play' with text.

P. G. Wodehouse: Carry On, Jeeves

The humor of Wodehouse depends on the gentle satire of the upper-class characters and the absurd comic situations of farce. In Carry On, Jeeves, the roles of servant and master are reversed as Jeeves, the perfect valet, bests his whimsical employer, Bertie Wooster. Much of the humor also stems from the social criticism and cultural differences. Not to be restricted to satirizing the English, Wodehouse's picture of an 'American captain of industry' gently mocks the American businessman.

As a rule, from what I've observed, the American captain of industry doesn't do anything out of business hours. When he has put the cat out and locked up the office for the night, he just relapses into a state of coma from which he emerges only to start being a captain of industry again.

(Chapter 2, p. 34)

Bertie, the benign innocent, is helpless without the sober, pensive actions of an obviously intellectually superior Jeeves. Largely as the result of his gentle nature and love of adventure, Bertie allows a comic gallery of friends and acquaintances to impose on him as he attempts to disentangle their affairs. Wodehouse mocks the pomposity of these characters with stereotyped phrases, humorous descriptions, and comically exaggerated conversations.

The young dilettante dominated by his overbearing mother are two of Wodehouse's best caricatures.

Lady Malvern was a hearty, happy, healthy, overpowering sort of dashed female, not so very tall but making up for it by measuring about six feet from the O.P. to the Prompt Side. She fitted into my biggest arm-chair as if it had been built round her by someone who knew they were wearing arm-chairs tight about the hips that season. She had bright, bulging eyes and a lot of yellow hair, and when she spoke she showed about fifty-seven front teeth.....

Motty, the son, was about twenty-three, tall and thin and meek-looking. He had the same yellow hair as his mother, but he wore it plastered down and parted in the middle. His eyes bulged too, but they weren't bright. They were a dull grey with pink rims. His chin gave up the struggle about half-way down, and he didn't appear to have any eyelashes. A mild, furtive, sheepish sort of blighter, in short. (Chapter 3, pp. 53-54)

Wodehouse's verbal ingenuity is delightful when he uses unusual words in unexpected places. Motty, the unbidden guest, is both a 'pill' and an 'excrescence.' The writer's parodying of stock English phrases repeatedly pushes to an excess known vacuities of speech.

.....I expected to find the fellow a wreck, but there he was, sitting up in bed, quity chirpy, reading Gingery Stories

'What ho!' I said.

'What ho!' said Motty.

'What ho! What ho!'

'What ho! What ho! What ho!'

After that it seemed rather difficult to go on with the conversation. (Chapter 3, p. 59)

Bertie is so typically British in manner and speech that to picture him among the natives of New York City is in itself a primary incongruity. He 'strains the old bean,' calls people 'chappies' and 'old top,' and is continually calling 'what ho!' The ridiculous picture of Bertie's sartorial elegance serves to allow Jeeves to exercise his impeccable taste in gentlemen's clothing.

'Don't you like this suit, Jeeves,' I said coldly.
 'Oh, yes, Sir.'
 'Well, what don't you like about it?'
 'It is a very nice suit, Sir.'
 'Well, what's wrong with it? Out with it, dash it!'
 'If I might make the suggestion, Sir, a simple brown
 or blue, with a hint of some quiet twill --'
 'What absolute rot!'
 'Very good, Sir.'
 'Perfectly blithering, my dear man!'
 'As you say, Sir.' (Chapter 1, p. 13)

As with everything else, Jeeves finally prevails, winning his way with a look, a raising of an eyebrow, or an averted gaze.

Reversal of roles, verbal ingenuity, mock pomposity, and unexpected slang all combine to mock the upper-class English gentleman. In order to see the humor in this narrative, the reader must understand that it is all an exaggeration. Wodehouse is funny because he parodies what is the picture of the typical Englishman and fashions caricatures. The excesses of the characters create an imbalance which makes them incongruous and therefore comic. Caricatures appear in children's funny books and children learn to laugh at those exaggerations. By the time the parodic form in literature emerges, excesses as part of the tradition of literary humor have been established.

Evelyn Waugh: The Loved One

Humor in literature may be benevolent, as in Shakespeare or Wodehouse, or it may extend into various kinds of satire, farce, or irony, all more exaggerated and biting kinds of humor. In The Loved One, Waugh's humor reaches the most bitter level, the sardonic. The ambiguities begin with the title and sub-title: The Loved One, an

Anglo-American tragedy. Is it a tragedy or is it a comedy? It is, in fact, both, as Waugh plays with the literary conventions of each. The entire concept of the typical Englishman in his tweeds ensconced in brash Hollywood is in itself a discordant theme. His dress, his speech, his inability to comprehend the man-eating society in which he lives creates an absurd spectacle. He is incongruous in his surroundings. For Sir Ambrose, keeping up one's position as an Englishman, set apart from his American counterparts, is his answer to acceptance in an alien society.

'We limeys have a peculiar position to keep up, you know, Barlow. They may laugh at us a bit -- the way we talk and the way we dress; our monocles -- they may think us cliquey and stand-offish, but, by God, they respect us. Your five-to-two is a judge of quality. He knows what he's buying and it's only the finest type of Englishman that you meet out here. I often feel like an ambassador, Barlow. It's a responsibility, I can tell you, and in various degrees every Englishman out here shares it....'
(Chapter 1, p. 13)

Underlying its biting satire of the elaborate funeral customs of both England and America is an undertone of violence and cruelty. Both the Happier Hunting Ground pet cemetery and Whispering Glades Memorial Park provide ludicrous settings populated by absurd characters whose words and actions interfere with the rituals of dying and being buried and turn them into a farce. Euphemisms, quite venal under the circumstances, cloak the language of death and dying and, in themselves, create a macabre verbal humor.

'The two-piece lid is most popular for gentlemen Loved Ones. Only the upper part is then exposed to view.'
'Exposed to view?'
'Yes, when the Waiting Ones come to take leave.'

'But I say, I don't think that will quite do. I've seen him. He's terribly disfigured, you know.'
(p. 39)

In his characters, Waugh offers comic mismatches that extend from the simple-minded, Aimée, awestruck by her job as a cosmetician at Whispering Glades, comical in her devotion to duty, to Mr. Joyboy, the senior mortician, the antithesis of his light-hearted surname. The earnestness of his professional attitude toward his lofty position at Whispering Glades is a gross absurdity.

Mr. Joyboy was the perfection of high professional manners. Before he came, there had been some decline of gentility in the ascent from show-room to workshop. There had been talk of 'bodies' and 'cadavers;' one jaunty young embalmer from Texas had even spoken of 'the meat.' That young man had gone within a week of Mr. Joyboy's appointment as Senior Mortician, an event which occurred a month after Aimée Thanatogenos' arrival at Whispering Glades as junior cosmetician. She remembered the bad old days before his arrival and gratefully recognized the serene hush which seemed by nature to surround him. (pp. 54-55)

Dennis, the epitome of the sardonic, is an unscrupulous hypocrite. The concept of a poet, commonly conceived of as gentle and aesthetic, portrayed as a cold, insensitive human being produces a reversal of roles that manipulates conventional expectations. His poetic attempts to woo Aimée illustrate, for Waugh, the collision of two different worlds in England and America.

.....English poets were proving uncertain guides in the labyrinth of Californian courtship -- nearly all were too casual, too despondent, too ceremonious, or too exacting; they scolded, they pleaded, they extolled. Dennis required salesmanship; he sought to present Aimée with an irresistible picture not so much of her own merits or even of his, as of the enormous gratification he was offering. The films did it; the crooners did it; but not, it seemed, the English poets. (p. 84)

By means of his mocking parody of advice columns that appear in daily newspapers, Waugh breaks the conventional narrative by introducing a new theme. Both the columnist and his writings are bitterly ridiculed.

There was a spiritual director, an oracle, in these parts who daily filled a famous column in one of the local newspapers. Once, in days of family piety, it bore the title of Aunt Lydia's Post Bag; now it was The Wisdom of the Guru Brahmin, adorned with the photograph of a bearded and almost naked sage. To this exotic source resorted all who were in doubt or distress.
(p. 80)

The bitter irony of Waugh is one of the most difficult kinds of humor for the reader to discern. While he spins a solemn tale, Waugh's pointedly satiric use of names and titles for characters and sites in the cemetery itself are comic textual clues for the reader. The mortuary employs 'hostesses,' the family of the deceased is called 'Waiting Ones,' and some cemetery areas are 'Poets' Corner' and 'Shadowland.' Waugh, a master at writing beneath the printed page, weaves a tale that, if read as a simple narrative, is chillingly sinister. But beneath the narrative line lies a bitter satire coated with a flippant humor.

Social process makes us aware of the realities of everyday life both in the context of life and in the context of discourse. This process enables adults and children to identify the incongruities that result when reality is tampered with and the comic arises. Works of literature survive because of a shared tradition that extends through the generations. Mocking one's betters has been a thematic

thread in comic literature since Aristophanes. The objects of derision may be politically, socially, or economically superior. Caricature is as funny today as it was to the Greeks and the exaggerated follies of man continue to be present in comic discourse. How, then, does the author break the boundaries of reality and invite the reader to share his joke. The writer does so by stepping out of his role as narrator and speaking directly to the reader (Aristophanes, Chaucer, Austen, Dickens, Thackeray), by speaking through his characters (Shakespeare, Jonson, Wilde, Molière, Wodehouse), and through his role as narrator by interrupting the flow of discourse to comment on events in the narrative (Sterne, Austen, Thackeray). When the writer does not intrude himself upon the text, he must find other ways to nudge the reader into realization of the comic. Some, like Molière and Jonson, create such blatant farce that the break with reality is self-evident. Others, like Jane Austen and Evelyn Waugh, write in two layers: the topmost, a straightforward narrative that could be taken literally by an unsuspecting reader, and a deeper layer into which the author invites the reader, a deep irony that negates what the characters are saying and points up their absurdities. All humorous writers criticize life as they know it in some way. Their modes of writing may be categorized in the following way:

Benign comedy: gentle humor without malice, characters
mocked through verbal play and light
jesting.

Wodehouse, some Shakespeare, Dickens

Satire: corrective attack on vices, tone of
superiority, inversion of roles, ideas,
and values, Life as it exists is not

accepted. Exaggerated caricature.
Aristophanes, Rabelais, Cervantes,
Sterne, Thackeray, and Shakespeare when
he speaks through the fool.

Farce: Exaggerated comedy with ludicrous
characters and situations that
burlesque the follies of ordinary life.
Molière, Jonson, Stoppard.

Irony: Realistic content with attitudes of
author beneath. Reader cannot always
be sure of author's intent.
Austen, Waugh
When the irony becomes bitter, it
approaches the sardonic, as in Waugh.

Having examined some comic works by European writers, I turn to
the United States to look for consistencies and differences in the
universality of humor, and the way in which a reader detects it.

F. Literary Humor in the United States

America's humor had its peaks at two crises in its history: the
first, in the middle of the 19th century both during and after the
Civil War, and the second, around the time of the great depression.
At no other time did more brilliant comical works appear. One would
suppose that in order to survive those tragic events, writers gave
the country what it needed most: a good laugh.

1. Humor of the Nineteenth Century

America's humor was born in the tall tale. Faced with a new
world vastly different from the Camelot settlers envisioned, their
strange and frightening adventures aroused the interest of visitors
from Europe eager for every detail. Wanting to satisfy that
interest and annoyed at the unpleasant picture painted of the

settlers by visiting English writers, Americans wove and embellished incredible yarns.

Once they had come to be funny on purpose, the lies that oldtimers told to explorers, tourists, immigrants, and tenderfeet who were credulous, or to other oldtimers who were in on the joke, might serve several purposes. In practically every instance, the humorous liars -- peeved or amused by false claims about the splendors or horrors of the new country -- parodied them. Some, disgusted by hardships or frightened by rumored menaces, lied about them to exorcise the damned things. Some trotted out lies to befool or show up strangers, or perhaps to initiate them into a new community. And some, the creative ones, revised or invented and embroidered whoppers for their own pleasure and that of appreciative listeners or readers.

(Blair & Hill, p. 8)

This quality of exaggeration has been isolated as the distinct difference between English and American humor. In addition, the unceremonious debunking of man and myth alike is the trait of the outspoken, defiant American. What foreigners called exaggeration, Constance O'Rourke called 'inflated fancy.'

Many mythologies have been created in which men believed; the inflated fancy belongs to all myth. But where, except on our frontiers, have been invented mythologies which men disbelieved in and still riotously enjoyed, heaping invention upon invention? And this special form of mythology has sprung up not once or transiently among us but many times and in many places.....

(Blair & Hill, p. 42)

There emerged, in America, a long line of characters who used fancy words while engaging in dirty tricks: the confidence man. By the

1830's, the national humor was established: exaggeration, plus eccentric characters speaking in native dialect. 'Comic collisions,' according to Blair and Hill, arose from several quarters, creating contradictions and incongruities: the tension between the educated and the illiterate, political ties, and regional differences. Writers exploited the movement of characters from one region to another to create a comic awkwardness. Yankees in the backwoods or yokels in New England were bound to present a humorous picture.

As the population moved west, so moved its humor. Western or frontier humor shared the characteristics of Easterners, such as Artemus Ward and Bret Harte. Certainly humor included some widely dissimilar areas: the old Southwest, the mining frontier, and the Pacific coast. But it is not incorrect to refer to the whole area as the West or Frontier as a definition of America still very much in the process of settlement. Life was difficult for the people; settlers survived by hard work and sheer determination. Their casual speech, which was reflected in the humorous writings of the time, came from a disregard for formality that pioneer life developed. Since there was no native mythology, folk-heroes were invented: from Davy Crockett to Buffalo Bill and Wild Bill Hickok. Indians were killed, enemies conquered, and legends grew. The talltale reached new heights in the West and was the heart of the American oral tradition. Artemus Ward and Josh Billings were highly successful orators who subsequently published their monologues. Supposedly the work of an illiterate man, the pieces were in

dialect, misspelled, with puns and plays-on-words. Each had his own kind of humor, but collectively it was Western.

The Plane Deeler:
Sir:

i write to no how about the show bisnes in Cleeveland
i have a show consisting in part of a Calforny Bare
two snakes tame foxies &c also wax works my wax works
is hard to beat, all say they is life and nateral
curiosities among my wax works is Our Saveyer Gen
taylor and Docktor Webster in the ackt of killing
Parkman. now mr. Editor scratch off few lines and tel
me how is the show bisnes in your good city i shal
have hanbils printed at your offis you scratch my back
i will scratch your back, also git up a grate blow in
the paper about my show don't forgit the wax works.

yours truly,
ARTEMUS WARD
Pitsburg Penny

P S pitsburg is a l horse town. A.W.
(Blair & Hill, p. 278)

Their writings prepared the way for Mark Twain whose elements of humor were familiar to Americans before he wrote them. Deriving from the comic style of Artemus Ward, the poster outside of a hall in which he was to lecture once read:

Doors open at 7-1/2. The trouble will begin at 8.

The literary comedians of the second half of the 19th century were historically important. Their humor became national rather than local and the inherent American trait of laughing at oneself was established. By resorting to dialectal emphasis, gross misspellings, and violation of the rules of punctuation, these humorists break the rules of syntax and semantics and draw attention

away from the content to the construction of the text. It is not just what they say that is funny, but the way in which they say it.

Mark Twain

Mark Twain's humor embodies the two comic figures of American literature: the boaster and the poor soul. Relating these figures back to the Greeks, Blair and Hill point out that the former is the descendant of the 'alazon' and the latter of the 'eiron' (discussed later in this chapter). Frye (1957) refers to the alazon as the 'imposter' and the eiron as the 'self-deprecator.' As I shall note later in this chapter, they are traceable throughout the history of humorous literature.

In what is generally agreed to be the greatest example of American humor of the nineteenth century, The Adventures of Huckleberry Finn (1884), Mark Twain has written a boy's story that knows no age limits. The more one reads it, the more one realizes all that has been missed in earlier readings. Using the first person narrative, Twain intrudes on his novel as both author and character. Huck is Mark Twain, the boy of the river, the impassive observer who neither interferes nor judges, but tells his tale. The contrast that exists between Huck, the teacher, and Jim, the pupil, is the heart of Twain's humor and the incongruity in the discourse. A more comical incongruity exists in Huck playing the teacher, pretending to know so much, and really knowing very little. There is a little of the imposter in Huck and a lot of the poor soul in Jim. They are funny but do not see themselves that way and engage

seriously in weighty discussions. But Twain creates a paradox in Jim, the ignorant slave, who proves to know much more than Huck after all. Huck, who is at first amused and exasperated by Jim's arguments, finally realizes his wisdom.

Jim was laid up for four days and nights. Then the swelling was all gone and he was around again. I made up my mind I wouldn't ever take a-holt of a snake-skin again with my hands, now that I see what had come of it. Jim said he reckoned I would believe him next time.
(Ch. 10)

With the author as character, Twain has slipped out of his narrative and Huck has slipped in and the boundaries have been manipulated. For we know Twain is there, that he is Huck and has invited us to share the world of his childhood. But the author introduces his story as writer and invites us to share his narrative which he presents as purely fictive.

Explanatory

In this book a number of dialects are used: the Missouri Negro dialect; the extremist form of the backwoods Southwestern dialect; the ordinary "Pike County" dialect; and four modified varieties of this last. The shadings have not been done in a haphazard fashion, or by guesswork; but painstakingly, and with the trustworthy guidance and support of personal familiarity with these several forms of speech. I make this explanation for the reason that without it many readers would suppose that all these characters were trying to talk alike and not succeeding.

THE AUTHOR

Notice

Persons attempting to find a motive in this narrative will be prosecuted; persons attempting to find a moral in it will be banished; persons attempting to find a plot in it will be shot.

BY ORDER OF THE AUTHOR

Per G. G., Chief Ordnance

The use of dialect with its improbable spelling is a broad

linguistic play. While there is no doubt that Black Americans talked that way, seeing the dialect in print draws one farther away from the content into the structure of the piece. What Jim says is funny, but the way he says it is even funnier. The same holds true for Huck to whom cigars are 'seegars' and French phrasing becomes 'Polly-voo-franzy.' Mark Twain, in the tradition of humor, exploited these differences. The collision between Huck's and Jim's philosophies is comically absurd. Huck in his role as Biblical scholar, discusses with Jim the story of King Solomon and his harem. Jim reflects that he couldn't be very wise if he lived among all of those women.

Huck is an innocent, but he is also a liar. His lies show up his imposter qualities yet he has our sympathy. He is sensitive and virtuous, a victim of the poor white beginnings that Americans understand so well.

Twain plays with conventional temporal boundaries. Time in the context of the everyday world has its boundaries: a beginning and an ending, but both Huck and his river go on into infinity with no end in sight.

.....But I reckon I got to light out for the Territory ahead of the rest, because Aunt Sally she's going to adopt me and sivilize me, and I can't stand it. I been there before.

(Chapter the Last)

A Connecticut Yankee in King Arthur's Court (1889)

Twain's parody of Morte d'Arthur was written to mock the absurdities of feudal England and show what his modern America could

have accomplished in the sixth century. Like Cervantes, he exposes the ludicrous in chivalry. The primary incongruity is in the picture of Hank Morgan, the typical Yankee, tramping irreverently through King Arthur's England. Traveling incognito, both Hank and Arthur are picked up and the king is sold as a slave.

It was in Warwick Castle that I came across the curious stranger whom I am going to talk about Exactly as I would speak of my nearest personal friends or enemies, or my most familiar neighbors, he spoke of Sir Bedivere, Sir Bors de Ganis, Sir Launcelot of the Lake, Sir Galahad, and all the other great names of the Table Round -- and how old, old, unspeakably old and faded and dry and musty and ancient he came to look as he went on!

(A Word of Explanation)

The juxtaposition of the 6th and 19th century worlds creates an incongruity. The crowd, crowing with delight at the anticipated hangings is in a holiday mood; they taunt and jeer as the king is readied for his hanging. Suddenly to the rescue comes Launcelot leading:

five hundred mailed and belted knights on bicycles!
The grandest sight that ever was seen. Lord, how the
plumes streamed, how the sun flamed and flashed from
the endless procession of webby wheels!

(Chapter 38)

The writer makes a mock-heroic scene by the juxtaposition of the traditional trappings and humble two-wheelers. Twain, sitting in Warwick Castle, widens the distance between the ordinary and the make-believe and puts the reader in the mood for the tongue-in-cheek narrative. Looking over his shoulder as he reads Malory's tales, he invites us to hear the story told by a stranger, a stranger who is Twain himself. The duality of author and narrator in this section dissolves and reforms the boundaries between reality and fiction and

creates a fabulation: a fictive within a fictive. This pattern continues throughout the narrative with Twain as author narrating alternately with Morgan, the principal character, and allows Twain to satirize English literature.

The mingling of Morgan's nineteenth century American language and ideas with those of sixteenth century England creates ludicrous amalgam. The alazon of the narrative, Morgan, soon has the page, Clarence, talking and thinking as he does.

And presently up comes Clarence, his own self! and winks, and says, very modernly: "Good deal of a surprise, wasn't it? I knew you'd like it. I've had the boys practicing this long time, privately; and just hungry for a chance to show it off."
(Chapter 38)

Morgan's absurd attempt to modernize Arthur's England results in his bringing 19th century innovations while garnering for himself the title of 'the Boss.'

In four years he had established a system of schools; including Sunday schools; a "teacher factory;" a bicycle factory; an arms factory; telephone and telegraph lines; and fire, life, and accident insurance businesses.
(Chapter 6)

Hank Morgan, the Yankee from Connecticut, with his bicycles, telephones, and Colt revolvers is the prototype of the American boaster. His tall tales and chicanery mirror what made the 19th century American laugh. The exciting thing about Twain is his whole parody of literature and its production.

2. The New Yorkers

It was during the ante and post-depression periods that the poor

soul was most perfectly drawn. Invariably presented as the father, he was hopelessly incompetent and incapable of coping. These comic neurotics were felled by their wives, their children, their dogs, and anything mechanical. The difference between this and the earlier poor soul is that in these writings the author himself is presented as the hapless bumbler. Their self-deprecating jokes, verbal punning, and sheer madness were best exemplified by Robert Benchley, S. J. Perelman, and James Thurber.

Benchley

It was Benchley who first presented the perfectly characterized poor soul. His 'Little Man' was baffled by the simplest tasks.

I pull and yank, take the collar off and rearrange the tie, try gentle tactics, followed suddenly by a deceptive upward jerk, but this gets me nothing. The knot stays loosely off-center and the tie appears to be stuck somewhere underneath the collar at a point perhaps three inches to the right. After two minutes of this mad wrenching one of three things happens -- the tie rips, the collar tears, or I strangle to death in a horrid manner with eyes bulging and temples distended, a ghastly caricature of my real self.

('The Four-in-Hand Outrage')

Benchley's fumbling ineffectual little man was depicted in virtually all of his works, but none better than in his 1942 collection, Inside Benchley. Presenting a whole series of minor dilemmas before which the little man cringes, 'Coffee, Megg, and Ilk, Please,' depicts his absolute terror in the presence of the working man, be he elevator operator or soda clerk.

But when I am confronted, in the flesh, by the "close up" of a workingman with any vestige of authority, however small, I immediately lose my

perspective -- and also my poise. I become servile, almost cringing. I feel that my modest demands on his time may, unless tactfully presented, be offensive to him and result in something, I haven't been able to analyze just what, perhaps public humiliation.

Benchley as author and anti-hero reduced himself to such absurd proportions that there is never any question of reality. The simple act of telling the elevator operator his floor has been excruciatingly complicated until it is beyond the bounds of the possible. His persistence in facing all working men as antagonists is a ludicrous fantasy.

As others of his period, Benchley satirized the institutions of 20th century American life. His topics are recognizable as part of the complexity of everyday life. Understanding the political party system is another of those puzzles.

During the early years of our political history the Republican Party was the Democratic Party, or, if you chose, the Democratic Party was the Republican Party. This led naturally to a lot of confusion especially in the Democratic Party's getting the Republican Party's mail; so it was decided to call the Republicans "Democrats" and be done with it. The Federalist Party (then located at what is now the corner of Broad and Walnut streets and known as "The Swedish Nightingale") became, through the process of Natural Selection and a gradual dropping-off of its rudimentary tail, the Republican Party as we know it today.

('Political Parties and Their Growth')

The absolutely absurd essay reverses itself thereby negating its previous statements. The piece is noted as being both the introduction and possibly the last chapter on political parties. Democrats are called Republicans and Republicans are called Democrats. The more Benchley explains, the more confused he becomes until any relation to political parties in America is hopelessly obliterated.

Benchley also adds to the fun by parodying the essay form complete with thanks to colleagues, who are listed like entries in a telephone book, and a completely ridiculous bibliography absolutely unrelated to his topic. The use of footnotes, which ordinarily supplement the text, as a contradiction to the text, parodies the form of the story material.

In the back of the book, we discover a worthless 'Glossary of Kin, Native and Technical Terms' with no technical terms, a list of abbreviations from the Old and New Testaments, a bibliography of books in sexual psychology, and an index which is obviously a page from a New York City telephone book. It is a fitting end to a book of sheer buffoonery.

Benchley parodies the life of the average American man by portraying him as the 'innocent fool.' His 'little man' is the modern American clown, continuing the literary tradition of mocking man in his struggle for survival. Like the traditional comic writers, he satirizes social and political institutions by pointing up their absurdities. Modern American readers share Benchley's culture and understand that his satire is part of the 'tradition' that both the reader and the writer know. It is a kind of conspiracy between reader and writer making the narrator the butt of the joke.

S. J. Perelman

Perelman's little man differs substantially from Benchley's. Rather than approaching life with an air of defeat, he sees himself

as a dashing bon vivant.

Benchley's Little Man looked in the mirror and saw Wimpy; Perelman's creation saw "a man who looks like Ronald Colman and dances like Fred Astaire."

(Blair & Hill, p. 434)

Using the first person narrative with author as central character, he too stumbles his way through a world conspiring to defeat him. The everyday world of advertising, books and newspapers sends him into incoherent daydreams with a cast of absurd characters. The flood of advertisements in the media is the subject of 'Tomorrow, Fairly Cloudy' (in Crazy Like a Fox, 1944). From musing about the absurdity of cartoon strips advertising toothpaste, Perelman fantasizes a full-scale spectacle.

In less than two panels, Mr. Hess is breaking the bad news to Patty. "I'm afraid you won't do, Miss Patty. Your teeth are good, but not good enough. For camera work they have to be perfect." To Miss Jones, Mr. Hess' secretary, Patty sobs out her chagrin. "I've failed, Miss Jones...and we needed the money so badly!" "Failed! Fiddlesticks!" counters Miss Jones briskly. "All you need to do is use a special type of tooth paste that our best models and screen stars use. LISTERINE TOOTH PASTE is its name. Try it two weeks ... then come back."

(p. 186)

Introducing a play within the narrative, Perelman breaks the traditional rule of story. The switch from author as narrator to drama form, with author commenting through footnotes, adds to the incongruity. The language is a perfect parody of media advertising.

Mrs. Fletcher -- Don't mind us, Verna, we just dropped in to sneer at your towels (unfolding a towel). My, they're so absorbent and fluffy, aren't they? You know they're made of selected fibers culled from high-grade flat-tailed Montana sheep subject to rigid

inspection by qualified sheep inspectors.
(pp. 188-89)

Chattering on in commercial lingo, they remain unaware that the basement is flooded until it is too late and they all drown. Perelman's little man is caught in a world out of his control and he fights back with satirical wit, fantasizing about a world in which his antagonists are beaten.

James Thurber

The humorist as 'little man' continues, fighting with machines, women, children, animals and bowing to his perpetual defeat. Depending less upon punning and word-play than Benchley and Perelman, Thurber's humor is less madcap and more rational. His mocking self-portrait in My Life and Hard Times (1933) portrays an anxious, maladjusted figure struggling against aggressive women, eccentric relatives, and chaotic situations. In 'The Night the Bed Fell,' a decision by father to sleep in the attic unleashes a chain of comic events that propels the reader into a fantasy world of confused chaos.

Father, farthest away and soundest sleeper of all, had by this time been awakened by the battering on the attic door. He decided that the house was on fire. "I'm coming, I'm coming!" he wailed in a slow, sleepy voice -- it took him many minutes to regain full consciousness. My mother, still believing he was caught under the bed, detected in his "I'm coming!" the mournful, resigned note of one who is preparing to meet his Maker. "He's dying!" she shouted.

(p. 24)

The author as narrator reports the fantastic happenings in a

matter-of-fact way juxtaposing fact and fantasy. The combination of many relatives and the narrator's calm acceptance of events are an incongruous pairing of opposites. Thurber alludes to the fictive quality of the piece in the opening paragraph.

It makes a better recitation (unless, as some friends of mine have said, one has heard it five or six times) than it does a piece of writing, for it is almost necessary to throw furniture around, shake doors, and bark like a dog, to lend the proper atmosphere and verisimilitude to what is admittedly a somewhat incredible tale.

(p. 17)

Like Benchley and Perelman, Thurber carries on the humorous tradition of man as the eternal clown, fighting his way through life, barely averting disaster. Thurber's characters are funny because everything they do is exaggerated beyond the believable. The eccentricities and obsessions of people Thurber remembers and writes of represent a departure from convention. Even the dog, the antipathy of man's best friend, bites his way through Thurber's human comedy.

Benchley, Perelman, and Thurber represent a departure from their 19th century ancestors. All exaggerated their humor but in different directions. The older humorists exaggerated their difficult life and their ability to survive, the modern humorists exaggerate their insignificant difficulties and their inability to overcome them. Still there are links that remain: the struggle for man's survival against any and all odds.

Nurtured by a free press, native American humor has always been a purge for worries and tribulations -- the struggles of a democratic

nation to get going, frontier hardships, wartime tragedies, the upheavals accompanying the shift from an agrarian, rural society to an industrial, urban society. In that sense, Day, Benchley, Thurber and Perelman write in an old and honorable tradition.

(Holmes, 1974)

SUMMARY:

All comic texts create in the reader a multi-consciousness that makes him aware of the boundary between reality and fantasy. Stewart's play with boundaries has been used as a basis for examining how writers of timeless comic works make the reader aware of the fictive. It is useful to look at the entire group and note how they create humor by departing from the conventional narrative.

Author as Narrator/Commentator
and/or Principal Character

Aristophanes
Chaucer
Rabelais
Jonson
Moliere
Sterne
Austen
Dickens
Thackeray
Twain
Benchley
Perelman
Thurber

Simultaneity (more than one
world)

Rabelais
Cervantes
Chaucer
Shakespeare
Dickens
Twain
Stoppard

Denial of Discourse
(contradiction by reversal or
inversion)

Shakespeare
Stoppard

Deficiency of Signification (interruption of narrative)	Chaucer Rabelais Sterne Dickens
Surplus of Signification	
1. Shape of language on page	Jonson Sterne
2. Exaggeration of detail	Rabelais Sterne Chaucer Johnson
3. Caricature	Molière Cervantes Sterne Wilde Waugh Wodehouse
Play with Infinity (unframed temporal boundaries)	Sterne Twain
Character Opposites Emphasizing the Fictive	Carpenter & Alison Nicholas & Absalom Chaucer Jaques & Touchstone Shakespeare Tartuffe & Orgon Molière Don Quixote & Sancho Cervantes Catherine & Isabelle Thorpe & Henry Austen Mr. Pickwick & Sam Dickens Becky & Amelia Thackeray Jeeves & Bertie Wodehouse

I shall also return to a subject raised earlier in this chapter,

the alazon and the eiron, the two contrasting characters who have been historically significant in literary tradition. Looking back at our humorous works we find the appearance of these characters in many.

Alazon

Dicaeopolis (The Archanians)
Thorpe (Northanger Abbey)
Uncle Toby (Tristram Shandy)
Huck Finn (Huckleberry Finn)

Mr. Joyboy (The Loved One)

Eiron

Tristram Shandy
Artemus Ward
Jim (Huck Finn)
Hank Morgan (Connecticut
Yankee)
Benchley
Perelman
Thurber

G. The 'Successful Reader'

Having proposed that certain humorous conventions have been traditional in both European and American literature, we wonder how the reader knows when comic writers are 'breaking the rules.' Wayne Booth (1961) suggests that it is shared conventions that are the key. Booth suggests that the successful reader emerges when the 'second self' of the author and the 'second self' of the reader are in complete agreement (p. 138). I have already proposed that the reader's understanding of the social process and a shared sense of reality impacts on his acceptance of an author's work. The more distance the author places between himself and the reader, the more difficult it is for the reader to enter his fictive world. Booth points out that contemporary authors are more apt to allow their characters to work out their own problems without interference. The multiple voices of an author can take many forms as we have already

discussed: direct address to the reader, commentary on events, or author as character.

Booth refers to the 'second self' of the author as the 'implied author.' The narrator as the agent for the implied author may be merely an observer who relates events ("I") or a narrator-agent who has both involvement and effect upon the course of events. Dramatized narrators (I) who relate events serve as the spokesman for the implied author. Both Rabelais and Sterne use this technique. Others, like Austen and Thackeray, use it intermittently and retreat to their positions as undramatized narrators (no use of "I"). The impersonal narration increases the distance between author and reader and creates a complexity that is apt to confuse the reader. The irony of Jane Austen and Evelyn Waugh may be completely lost because the reader has no adequate warning that the writer does not mean what he is saying. One is never in any doubt about Sterne's or Dickens' views. When both the reader's and author's 'second selves' are in agreement the reader has accepted the discourse intellectually, morally, and aesthetically. This 'second self' is closely related to Winnicott's 'third area:' the area to which both adult and child retreat to enter the fictive world. Both create the freedom to avoid and yet satisfy what James Britton has called the demands of 'inner necessity.' The world of literature assimilates this inner need with the external demands of society.

We are also concerned with what psychological forces are at work within the reader to make a satisfactory communion with the writer.

In an earlier chapter I have proposed that incongruity is the earliest sense of the comic to be recognized by children. As I have shown, this kind of humor is basic to all humorous literature be it through caricature, the mocking of society, or play with language. Once the boundaries of known reality are broken an incongruity results.

As previously discussed, Freud and his followers have established a connection between joking and the release of subconscious sexual and aggressive tendencies. Carrying that concept over to written discourse, the bawdy licentiousness of Aristophanes, Chaucer, Rabelais, and Jonson can be acknowledged as serving the same purpose for the theatre-going and reading public. Freud's notion of subconscious aggressive tendencies coupled with Hobbes' theories of superiority may be related to the laughing at one's betters contained in Aristophanes, Shakespeare, Molière, and Wilde. All of the writers discussed have in some way mocked society either through political, economic, or class denegration. The appreciation of satire and farce is in itself a striking out at society and a release of aggression. The more sardonic the humor is, the more aggressive it becomes. The more the reader can identify with the writer's intent, the more the release of shared aggressions will occur. It is a universal malady to resent others who are members of a higher social, economic, or intellectual class. Collaborating with Wilde or Jonson or Thackeray creates a common bond. At the same time, 'getting the joke' through Aristophanes or Rabelais affords a release from psychological

tensions.

This discussion of the reader and his reactions to traditional humorous literature takes for granted a shared awareness between the reader and the writer. But can we really believe that all who read Chaucer, Jonson, Molière, and Wodehouse share their literary traditions? I think not. Some readers read a modern humorous writer and find him funny because the settings and characters are familiar. Others will read Rabelais, Cervantes, or Sterne and turn away, finding their patchwork texts too difficult to piece together and so miss some of literature's greatest comic works: 'funny' to one is not necessarily 'funny' to another. The broad bawdy humor of Chaucer and Jonson can still amuse those who find Stoppard too difficult to comprehend. We must question whether 'the traditions' of humor are necessary to the appreciation of all humorous texts. One man's humor may be another man's tragedy. A miserly individual will not find Volpone funny. Once reality enters the pages of the text humor is lost. It would be comforting to believe that all readers, past and present, share a common awareness of what makes comic literature survive. We who study literature do share a knowledge of traditional conventions, but what of the others? It is a question that has no answer or many possible answers. What is clear is the fact that individuals respond to humorous literature for very varied and personal reasons, sometimes because of, or sometimes in spite of, tradition.

Having examined the prototypes offered by great humorous works, I now turn to literature for children to discover whether or not these qualities exist in children's books as well.

VIII. HUMOROUS LITERATURE FOR CHILDREN: THE TRADITIONS

As I have previously proposed, certain conditions must exist before humor can be appreciated by the child. Philosophers and psychologists support the assumption that incongruity is the earliest and simplest form of humor experienced by children and that it involves psychological processes unknown to the child. Some psychologists propose that humor based on incongruity depends upon the development of the child's capacity for symbolic play (See Piaget, *Psychological Studies*.) They argue that cognitive development is intrinsic in distinguishing what constitutes a 'match' or a 'mismatch.' Further, it is through play that the first signs of humor appear. Social psychologists suggest that 'learning the rules' is the primary function of play in childhood. Play, as part of the social setting, is influenced by the other group members and forces the individual to internalize the 'rules' of his group culture. Thus humor, as a play technique, is socially learned, and responses are heightened or diminished according to the views of the members of the group. Humor then becomes a shared experience that is possible because of the uniformity and the continuity of the subjects or objects of that humor. Humor is transmitted through speech, language, and action and requires the mastery of certain metalinguistic abilities to enable the child to perceive meaning. Play, as the first stage of the joke (see Freud, *psychoanalytic interpretations of play*, *Psychology Section*), is the place where verbal humor begins. But 'getting the joke' is only possible when metalinguistic ability allows the child to reason critically (see

metalinguistic awareness and its development in children, Language Section). Speech play is linked to humor in books. The child appreciates humorous books when he is linguistically able to engage in and comprehend speech play. Joking requires the recognition of the joke 'frame' before the incongruity can be seen and remarked upon. The frame is learned through continued social experience and incongruities are recognized and resolved only when the child has internalized the congruous.

I propose that all of these assumptions apply to written language as well as to speech play. In addition, I submit that certain 'frames' must be learned before the funny book can be enjoyed. These frames are learned models of literary humor. They are used by authors to introduce the child to those techniques necessary for understanding a particular kind of humor. Once the child recognizes the frame, he is free to resolve the incongruous in a story or a written joke as he does in speech play. In his early books, the child may begin by remarking upon simple incongruities, and, as he grows, he needs to understand more intricate techniques for reading or listening. Not merely the slapstick antics of simple characters, but more complex situational circumstances coupled with an increased play with language offer the maturing reader a more intellectual humor. These interactions of author and reader, and the joking that is operating between them, from Alice into the twentieth century, will be discussed in this section.

A. The Manipulation of Discourse

1. Susan Stewart's Analyses

Although I have previously discussed Stewart's analysis of nonsense-making, certain points need to be made in relation to children's literature. If we are to test her analysis of techniques in children's poetry and prose, we need a different emphasis. Although the general categories of nonsense-making can still be used, the way they are applied needs certain readjustments. Let's review what Stewart says.

In the chapter, 'Play with Boundaries' (pp. 85-112), Stewart shows how children recognize 'play' language as different from the language of common sense. She suggests that rhyme is the signal for play performance in counting out rhymes, tongue twisters, and the choruses of lullabies as the shift away from the language of everyday life to the language of the game. Other forms of play that are vitalized in discourse follow.

Reversals and inversions, taking a commonsense form and in some way turning it into nonsense, is accomplished by: inverting classes, where animals become humans, humans become animals, animate objects become inanimate, and inanimate objects become animate. The following rhyme, collected by the Opies (1959, p. 31) illustrates the inversion of an animal into a human.

A pig walked into a public house
And asked for a drink of beer.
Where's your money, sir?
In my pocket, sir...

The use of this kind of speech play is exploited by writers in texts for children. Animal stories that humanize animals who act like humans in oral discourse are ready to receive them in written discourse, as the creatures who speak in Alice.

Simultaneity, the paradox of 'two things' existing in the same space, is employed by the author in several ways: combining elements of disparate domains within one text and creating a discontinuity, the pun, which involves two or more meanings within one word, and the portmanteau, which involves two or more words within one meaning. Edward Lear often used discontinuity.

Lobster and owls,
Scissors and fowls
Set him a howling
And hark how he howls.

Arrangement and rearrangement within a closed field plays with content within a conventional form and content becomes secondary to form. This is accomplished by appropriating the metonymic structure of a game for a story or playing with the concept of alphabetical order to create nonsense. Lewis Carroll used this technique in Alice borrowing the structure of the card game. Another play with discourse, what Stewart calls surplus of signification, is the calligram which takes a conventional form and reframes it on the page forcing the reader to attend to shape as well as content, like the mouse's tale in Alice.

In addition to the use of Stewart's analysis of techniques, I shall consider the conventions that writers use to create literary humor for children, what the child has to learn to do when he reads the book, and how these processes are exploited by the writer. The examination of these traditional conventions in children's texts will illustrate how they are linked with the techniques of humorous discourse in adult literature discussed in the previous chapter.

2. The Uses of Parody

Parody is the classical way of keeping a known frame, in spoken or written language, yet 'breaking' what is inside. This is the continuing form of humor for both adults and children. Historically and currently, the parodic form is found in poetry as well as prose. Writers take serious topics and help children see the humor in them by creating a parodic frame. They also take the opportunity to mock literary forms through parody. We shall see that with Alice, the true beginning of children's humorous books, how the parodic form was adopted. Children learn this 'frame' through the oral tradition and are then able to apply it to the literary.

According to the Opies(p.107), parodies give the child a way of showing independence without blatant rebellion. The butt of parodic humor may be social or religious institutions, or adults, to whom they must defer, mocked in a slightly improper tone. By parodying traditional lore, children create a tradition of their own .

Our Father which art in heaven bought a pair of
braces for two and eleven..... (Opie, p.107)

Mary and Herbert Knapp(1976) also discuss parodies as reactions to authority and expressions of resentment toward institutions like school and religion. Children invent parodies of advertised products, school songs, patriotic songs, and social taboos including sex, scatology, and racism.

Pepsi-Cola hits the spot,Ties your belly in a knot,
Tastes like vinegar, looks like ink,
Pepsi-Cola is stinky drink. (Knapp,p.163)

Parodic forms are a way for the child to release repressed aggressions (Freud) without fear of reprisal. Parodies are all in 'fun' and by the nature of the form are not to be taken seriously. 'Making fun' of society, its institutions, and 'sacred cows' is a way for the child to achieve a feeling of superiority in a world where he must defer to adult domination. In addition, they prepare the child for great literary parodic texts.

B. The Oral Tradition

The child begins to play with language when he is quite small (see Language section: Metalinguistic Awareness and its Development in Children). He enjoys the sound of language before he understands its meaning. Rhymes, jingles, songs, and puns are all part of playing with sounds. Later, when metalinguistic awareness is more fully developed, the meaning of joking becomes important. Puns can no longer be enjoyed for sound alone, but must be semantically appropriate. Still, all kinds of oral joking remain popular because the child is very much aware that jokes constitute 'playtime.' The

child may experiment with humorous discourse without fear of reprisal. He need not meet set standards but can simply relax and enjoy the fun of linguistic play. As with general literature, the literary tradition of children's humor lies in both the oral and the written forms. The comprehensive study by the Opies pointed out the enormous scope of the oral tradition. They noted that nursery rhymes pass from mother to child and are actually 'adult' rhymes since they are preserved and handed down by adults, but always to children. Pure children's lore passes from child to child and its rhymes are meant for children's ears alone. In fact, much of their fun is directly attributable to the fact that adults are usually ignorant of their lore. Traditional lore exists everywhere, city and country transcending different backgrounds and passing quickly from one child to another. These rhymes are rarely original but are variations or adaptations of popular songs. There are two different kinds of lore: one is slang lore, including comic song, jokes, phrases, and names and is spread rapidly, the other is in dialect, which is made of more serious and often anti-social activity such as sneaking, swearing, tormenting, and fighting. This latter type of lore is long-lasting but very localized. It is the first type, the slang, in which I am interested because, as conventional oral tradition, it is the way in which children learn about the literary tradition.

1. Slang Lore

Children are entranced by a cacophony of jingles, rhymes, songs, jokes, and nonsense. Rhyme seems to appeal as being purely funny with no meaning necessary. Sound-alikes indicate that it is all in fun and need no meaning to support them.

Mrs. White had a fright
In the middle of the night.
She saw a ghost eating toast
Half-way up the lamp post
(Opie. p.37)

Verbal incongruities, or what the Opies call 'tangletalk,' are part of children's lore. The fascination of an untruth that is unadulterated nonsense is irresistible fun.

One midsummer's night in winter The snow was
raining fast, A bare-footed girl with clogs on
Stood sitting on the grass. (Opie,P.44)

Puns are common types of children's lore and perennial favorites. The more absurd the more the child reacts.

We opened the window and influenza. (Opie. p.49)

Punning is a great equalizer. We are all vulnerable to the humiliation of being the butt of the pun or failing to 'get the joke.'

Riddles come in several forms and are so popular that children are fond of collecting them. There are true riddles. (what gets wetter when drying? A towel) and rhyming riddles, which are nearly always true riddles.

A Thimble

It is a little house It has a hundred windows Yet
it won't hold a mouse. (Opie.p.97)

There are punning riddles(What runs but never walks? A river) and conundrums, riddles whose answers are puns.

Why is a schoolboy like a postage stamp? Because
he is licked and put in a corner. (Opie. p.99)

Through the use of this kind of language play, the child learns the nature of joking in his culture. He gradually learns to distinguish between two realms of discourse: the logical and the illogical. The continued exposure to jokes and joking do not always require that jokes make 'sense.' The very absence of 'sense' is often what the joke is all about, as in jingles, rhymes, riddles, and puns. While joking is often indulged in for the sheer fun of playing with sound and/or meaning, social convention is often present. Joking is the 'in' thing among children and not to joke means not belonging to the group. As Bruner(1976) points out, 'different cultures encourage different forms of play as 'fitting' (p.18). Children learn the signals of joking as part of their language play.

The Knapps, in a study similar to the Opies', explored the oral tradition of American children. They concur that children's lore is styled expressly for other children and passed from child to child without the knowledge or participation of adults. They identify common jeers and taunts of children as plays for 'power and prestige.' Jeering can trap some, turn some into scapegoats, and punish others. The trickster, the child-clown, is a formidable figure on the playground. He tricks his friends, spreads hurt, twists the language to deceive, yet is respected and often feared.

"Bet I can make you say an Indian word. How?"
"Do you feel like a cup of tea? Say yes."
"Yes." "Well you look like one too." (p.96)

2. The Taboo

I have proposed that social relationships and interactions shape a child's world. Through certain gestures, manipulations, and verbal instructions the child is taught the elements of the common sense world. The socially accepted behavior that is passed on is not explicit; the world around the child reflects the structure he is meant to internalize. The child builds up expectations about how people will act in certain situations and it is these expectations that constitute the 'rules' of society. When these rules are broken an incongruity results and humor emerges. The escape from these societal pressures often creates a taboo humor.

Wolfenstein (see Psychological Studies, Psychoanalytic Verbal Play) has suggested that joking affords the opportunity to enjoy

something that is otherwise taboo. Learning from the Opies' work that children joke continually and have their own lore and language, we can extend that knowledge to become aware that society's adult-imposed restrictions force children to relieve those restraints through joking about taboo subjects. As children learn 'the rules', inner restraints develop that comply with society's demands for inhibiting certain behavior. The child develops the joking frame to satisfy both inner and outer controls. The young child is obsessed with scatological humor. For the four year old, 'Hello, Doody!' is uproariously funny (Wolfenstein). Children by the age of four have learned that bodily elimination and its byproducts are inappropriate topics for polite conversation. Joking, then, allows the repressed anxiety about these bodily functions to be relieved. The more mature child gradually turns from scatological humor to sexual humor. The joking takes a more complex form, still making the forbidden enjoyable. By mastering techniques for the release of tensions caused by taboo subjects, the child triumphs over his inhibitions and the restraints imposed more overtly by adults.

The appearance of the taboo in the process of making nonsense is a vital part of what constitutes humor in general and children's humor in particular. Stewart sees the taboo in terms of 'anomaly, ambiguity, and ambivalence.' All of these constitute ways by which writers create humor. Deviating from the common form, as when a writer reverses or inverts texts or denies discourse, is an anomaly. The reader must share a common culture with the writer in

order to recognize the reversibility of the text. When a text becomes ambiguous by opening itself to more than one interpretation, it threatens the integrity of text and so becomes taboo. Ambivalence, by causing conflicting feelings in a text and presenting more than one domain at a time, moves farther away from the everyday world and into the fictive. Both irony and farce bring in ambiguity and ambivalence - so long as the reader can see the parameters of the real world being shattered. By playing with the boundaries of the text the writer creates a taboo by making the frame of discourse ambivalent and ambiguous. The reader's attention is then directed away from content towards its construction. Therefore, when writers use verbal punning, we become more interested in their language play than in what they are saying. The use of deficiency of signification, in some way interrupting the discourse, constitutes an ambiguity and directs our attention to what is missing in the text, distracting us from the discourse itself. The deficiencies may take the form of missing words or sentences or play with punctuation, all sending ambiguous and often taboo messages. Children's scatological humor often utilizes deficiencies to endow it with the taboo that is attractive to them.

What starts with F and ends with uck?
Firetruck.

Like the above example, some children's scatological poetry creates a false gestalt because the end of the line is really the beginning of the next line. The reciter poses with an innocent gestalt.

Lulu had a steam boat
The steamboat had a bell
Lulu went to heaven
The steamboat went to
Hello, operator, give me number nine
If you disconnect me,
I'll kick you in the
Behind the refrigerator
lies a broken glass
Lulu fell down
And broke her big fat
Ask me no more questions,
I'll tell you no more lies,
That's what Lulu told me
Just before she died. (Stewart,p.105)

The taboo categories create tension between boundaries that implicate the resources of the subconscious relating to Freudian theory. The scatological joking of children gives way to sexual joking and eventually ethnic and black humor (See Cultural and Sociological Studies, Special Societies and their Humor), both in oral and written traditions.

A major body of children's oral humor includes hostility and verbal abuse.

"Do you collect stamps?"
"Yes."
"Well then, here's one for your collection!"
(stamps on companion's foot) (Anon.)

The implied humor is that the responder asked for the punishment and has, therefore, to agree to the joke, not cry about the pain.

Children's jokes are often rooted in anxiety and hostility as Wolfenstein has shown. The number one fool in American children's oral humor is the moron. He is the fool who threw his shoes away because they were sticking their tongues out at him.

Why did the moron throw the clock out the window?
To see time fly. (Anon.)

The moron is the forerunner to the more abusive ethnic jokes found in both Great Britain and America. These jokes use humor not merely for fun, but as a weapon against people who threaten us, because society labels them as different. Blacks, people of Polish, Irish, and Jewish descent are principal targets. Irish jokes are prevalent in England while Polish jokes prevail in America.

What does it say on the bottom of a Guinness bottle?
Open other end.

What does it say on the bottom of a Coca Cola bottle in Poland?
Open other end. (McCosh, p.63)

These fulfill a similar function both psychologically and sociologically. While relieving a child of his subconscious aggressions, they also represent the taboo: that which society has designated as unacceptable.

The cruel or sick joke, an additional freeing of pent-up anxiety, was circulating in England at the turn of the century (Schwartz. The Horn Book, 1977). Ruthless Rimes for Heartless Homes published during that period has as its hero, Billy, whose tales were nothing short of macabre.

Billy in one of his nice new sashes
Fell into the fire and was burned to ashes.
Now although the room grows chilly
I have not the heart to poke poor Billy.

The modern sick joke dates from the 1950's and continues to be told freely. It deals with murder, mutilation, and outright disregard for human affliction.

Mommy, why do I keep walking in circles?
Shut up, or I'll nail your other foot to the
floor.

The jokes that children tell provide emotional release from internal and external pressures. Participating in joke-telling, both as tellers and listeners, is one form of release, humorous stories are another. Today many of society's taboo areas are appearing in children's literature both in England and in America. The normalization of these areas frees the child to release his internal psychological pressures and the external societal pressures.

In this section, I have tried to show how the oral tradition of children's language and lore is directly connected to the acquisition of language (a metalinguistic awareness) and the cognitive development of the child (recognition of incongruities). Playing with the sounds of language and the ultimate acquisition of meaning must be accompanied by an awareness of the difference between commonsense and nonsense. The incongruous is only funny when the congruous is known. When the child becomes familiar with

the conventions of verbal joking, he can then apply that knowledge to the written text. Writers of comic texts, both for adults and for children, employ certain techniques that are learned by the child, who shares the joke with the writer; speech play becomes intertextual play.

I now move to the written tradition for children to link the techniques I have examined with traditional humorous literature for children.

C. The Written Tradition

1. The Literary Techniques of Humor

As in classic comic texts for adults, classic comic texts for children depend upon manipulation of discourse, incongruous characters, and absurd situations. While Stewart's analysis of the techniques for making nonsense through discourse are primarily derived from adult literature, Alice is an archetype for Stewart. However, the concept of play with boundaries has greater significance than serving as one technique for creating humor. It is, in fact, what every writer does when he invites the reader into his fictive world. I propose that each incongruity that formulates humor does so by some reforming of the boundaries of everyday life. When the fat man slips on a banana peel, this ludicrous sight is comically opposite to his ordinary stance. This same concept holds true for literature. When the ordinary is replaced by the incongruous, it becomes humorous. While Stewart's analyses of

techniques are easily applied to fantasy, I am also interested in realistic children's books, those narratives whose topics and characters reproduce the everyday world of children. How, then, does the writer capture the child's attention? How is the joke shared and the play with boundaries understood? Clearly, boundaries are formed and reformed, and often language play is evident, but temporal and spacial boundaries are framed to encompass the common sense world of children. These narratives rely upon exaggeration of details or events, eccentric characters, and often, linguistic play. Writers must appeal to the child's sense of story through realistically fictive means. As in classic comic works for adults, I propose that this is accomplished through three areas: character, situation, or discourse.

The Humor of Character

The clown-figure serves as a connecting link between adults and children. A child-like figure, yet possessing the freedom to do or say what he likes, he represents the imperfections of all men. To the child, his outrageous behavior mirrors the child's own playfulness. To the adult the absurd behavior of the clown is a comical picture of man's disasters. The circus clown, the comic strip character, and the film comic all bridge the world of the child and the adult. From the time the child hears poems and stories read aloud, to the time he reads them for himself, he has been sharing the clown with his adult companions. The outwitted sheriff of Nottingham, Reynard the Fox, and the fables of Aesop all

contain comic figures whose foolish actions place them in the role of the clown. In the lore of children, both the Opies and the Knapps have shown a history of the clown in jokes and funny stories. Riddles, parodies, and puns use peers as clown-figures by making them the butt of the joke. The Knapps identify the trickster, the child-clown, whose humiliation of his peers gives rise to a combination of fear and respect. Whether animal or human, the comic character of children's narratives are reminiscent of the fool of general literature. Toad (The Wind in the Willows), dashes about getting himself into one absurd situation after another. Peter Rabbit's naughty actions lead to his involvement in numerous escapades, and gentle Winnie-the Pooh, with his homespun humor, is a direct descendant of the gentle fool of Shakespeare.

The Humor of Situation

Like character humor, humorous situations depend on exaggeration. The stretching of plausibility until it becomes ludicrous is found in narratives that rely on situational humor. A story depends on situational humor when it is the situation itself, not the character, that creates the humor. Henry Huggins, sitting on a bus with a wriggling dog, is involved in a hilarious adventure not because Henry is funny, but because of the comical situations he inadvertently causes. The incongruous situation may involve the breaking of the boundary of the physical world: Mary Poppins flies, Orinoco sails away on his umbrella, Homer Price's doughnut machine never stops. The odd scrambling of people and events creates a

funny situation dependent upon characters or discourse only in a minor way. Some of these situations are examples of reversals or inversions: animals as humans, children as adults. The completely humanized animal family's humor lies in its exact representation of the child's world. The Frances stories (Hoban) are funny because Frances is actually a little girl engaged in all of the activities of little girls everywhere. Stuart Little (E.B.White), a mouse born into a human family, is a situation of absolute absurdity.

The Humor of Discourse

Humorous discourse in children's literature, when it is part of the nonsense tradition of Lewis Carroll and Edward Lear, depends upon reversals of form or meaning, the shape of the words on the page, or a linguistic dissonance. From all of these language plays, from the most obvious nonsense mutterings to the relatively intellectual pun, it is the incongruous that evokes the humor. Language humor in realistically framed narratives takes a different course. Not dependent upon linguistic gymnastics, the humor may involve dialect, repetition, meaning confusion, or distorted pronunciation. Realistic children's books do not rely on language play as the basis for their humor; it is too artificial a means to create a true-to-life narrative. In fact, it is only the Alice books that use language as a major technique for creating humor.

2. The Beginnings: Before 1865

The manipulation of discourse in children's poetry and prose may be found as far back as the early nineteenth century. Clown-like characters appear in narratives and bear a direct relationship to the clowns of classical literature. In this section, I shall examine the early texts for children that can be classified as 'funny.' These comic works did not appear until after John Newbery (1744) revolutionized children's books by treating them as fun, a kind of plaything. As the idea of childhood grew alongside the increasing awareness of children, notably in the eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries, so did literature for the young emerge as a distinct genre (Darton, 1958). Humorous books, as I see them, did not appear before the nineteenth century. Some literary historians (Darton, Townsend, 1974) attribute this to the domination of moral and didactic tales aimed at guiding and correcting children's behavior. Clearly, social and political conditions would directly impact on literary works, as I have discussed in relation to literature for adults. It is not my intention to analyze why humorous books for children were not available until the nineteenth century, others have accomplished this admirably. In fact, neither Darton nor Townsend have sections in their histories headed, humor for children. There were so few texts that could be called 'funny' before Alice that they are simply mixed in among animal tales and poetry sections. However, there were glimpses of 'playtexts' for children and it is to these works that I now turn.

In 1807, John Harris published William Roscoe's 'The Butterfly's Ball,' a poem written for the sheer amusement of his young son.

Come take up your Hats, and away let us haste.
To the Butterfly's Ball, and the Grasshopper's
Feast.
The Trumpeter, Gadfly, has summon'd the Crew,
And the Revels are now only waiting for you.

There are no morals to be learned, just an invitation to join with the 'children of earth and the tenants of air' to indulge in an evening of fun. As the poem unfolds, the creatures put aside their cares and join the others in the festivities. There is even a clown-character, the snail, who promises to dance a minuet, thereby provoking the entire company to loud laughter. Rhymed couplets capitalize on the technique that is so appealing to children in their speech play. The fantasy-land, where beetles, moths, moles, and mice celebrate together, plays upon the child's sense of the incongruous. The cheerful, simple fun of the poem is part of a new category of literature for children.

'The Comic Adventures of Old Mother Hubbard and her Dog' (Sarah Catherine Martin, 1805, reissued by John Harris in 1819), was part of a 'Cabinet of Amusement and Instruction.' There is no doubt that the clown-like dog, who engages in absurd activities, was, and still is, appealing to children. He plays dead, stands on his head, smokes a pipe, and dances a jig, all the while entrancing his loving mistress. The humanization of the animal reverses expectations and creates an incongruity.

She went to the cobbler's
To buy him some shoes;
When she came back
He was reading the news.
(Opie, 1980)

Harris also published, in 1821, a collection of nursery rhymes noted for the first appearance of the limerick later to be immortalized by Edward Lear, The History of Sixteen Wonderful Old Women. The content is ridiculous, with comic characters engaging in the most ludicrous activities.

There was an old woman of Croydon,
To look young she affected the hoyden,
And would jump and would skip
Till she put out her hip:
Alas, poor old woman of Croydon.
(Opie, 1980)

'Dame Wiggins of Lee, and Her Seven Wonderful Cats' was published simultaneously by Dean and Munday and A. K. Newman in 1823. The author is reputed to be 'a lady of ninety,' one Mrs. Pearson, who owned a Fleet Street toy shop, but sources indicate that it was probably Richard Scrafton Sharpe, a writer of light verse, who edited it (Opie, 1980). Reminiscent of 'Mother Hubbard,' it is a tale of an elderly lady whose humanized cats dominate her life. They walk on two legs, row boats, tend a sick lamb, and even attend school! Not without a moral, the tale of these wonderfully funny cats ends with their being rewarded for nursing the lamb back to health.

For the care of his lamb,
And their comical pranks,
He gave them a ham,
And abundance of thanks.
'I wish you good day,
My fine fellows,' said he;
'My compliments, pray,
To Dame Wiggins of Lee.'
(Opie, 1980)

Catherine Sinclair produced the best, funniest children's narrative to date in 1839. Titled Holiday House, the pages were filled with a kindly grandmother, a stern governess, Mrs. Crabtree, who was teased mercilessly by her charges, and 'a nice funny Uncle David,' who imparted comical counsel to the family.

Now children! I have only one piece of
serious, important advice to give you
all, so attend to me! -- Never crack nuts
with your teeth!

All of the texts discussed thus far, with the exception of Holiday House, have been in poetic form. These poems were nursery fare, presented to children by parents who enjoyed them as well. The important thing to remember about all of these pieces is that they are fun. This is a new kind of literature for children, written to entertain, and with nonsense at its core. Part of the fun in the rhyming is the unexpected combination of words. Various boundaries of the commonplace are broken making nonsense for the sake of rhyme. In 'Old Mother Hubbard' we read:

She went to the tailor's
To buy him a coat
When she came back
He was riding a goat.

These early literary works are the beginning of a genre in which children are free to 'play' with literature, but it remained for Lewis Carroll to revolutionize books for children.

3. Alice

The unique quality of Alice's Adventures in Wonderland (1865) and Through the Looking Glass (1871) lies in the fact that they were written to give children pleasure. We are treated to a story created with neither a lesson nor a moral. The sheer joy of Alice and her adventures are as fresh today as they were a hundred years ago. Although not received with great enthusiasm when first published, by the end of the century both books were firmly established as classics in children's literature. Harvey Darton describes it this way:

The directness of such work was a revolution in its sphere. It was the coming to the surface, powerfully and permanently, the first unapologetic, undocumented appearance in print, for readers who sorely needed it, liberty of thought in children's books. Henceforth fear had gone, and with it shy disquiet. There was to be in hours of pleasure no more dread about the moral value, the ponderable, measured quality and extent, of the pleasure itself. It was to be enjoyed and even promoted with neither forethought nor remorse.

(p. 268)

Alice is a difficult book for children to understand. Just as the child needs to have a metalinguistic awareness to understand jokes, for Alice, he needs to know about metafiction, stories that are told about stories. The child, Alice, and the child, the reader, expect Wonderland to work like the real world, and the story to work like a conventional narrative. Instead, Carroll writes a book that creates a way of talking about storybooks while being itself a story. In the story, Alice is showing how to mean (Halliday) in social, as well as, literary terms. Alice isn't humor, but a kind of fantasy whose fun lies in the world created by breaking the rules of the natural world.

Alice has been the subject of many lengthy and intricate interpretations that point up Carroll's implicit philosophical, psychological, social, and linguistic messages. Describing Carroll's work in terms of psychoanalytic theory, Leach (1964) identifies how the writer sympathetically describes the child's frustrations at the adult's lack of logic, his didacticism, and his contradictions. The characters preach to Alice like adults: patronizing, confusing, and ultimately ignoring her.

'Please would you tell me,' said Alice, a little timidly, for she was not quite sure whether it was good manners for her to speak first, 'why your cat grins like that?' 'It's a Cheshire cat,' said the Duchess, 'and that's why. Pig!' She said the last word with such sudden violence that Alice quite jumped;

Adults also condescend through language using words with meanings the child cannot comprehend.

'Why, what are your shoes done with?' said the Gryphon. 'I mean, what makes them so shiny?' Alice looked down at them, and considered a little before she gave her answer. 'They're done with blacking, I believe.' 'Boots and shoes under the sea,' the Gryphon went on in a deep voice, 'are done with whiting. Now you know.'

Alice's self-assertion is the child's rebellion against adult authority showing her courage to challenge and contradict.

'Rule Forty-two. All persons more than a mile high to leave the court.' Everybody looked at Alice. 'I'm not a mile high,' said Alice. 'You are,' said the King. 'Nearly two miles high,' added the Queen. 'Well, I shan't go, at any rate,' said Alice: 'besides, that's not a regular rule: you invented it just now.'

Alice's experiences expose anxieties that children may subconsciously harbor (Freud). There may be a fear of bodily change or mutilation: shrinking and growing, heads being cut off; the suspension or reversal of time, or food deprivation (Schilder, 1938).

Philosophically, Carroll points to a world gone mad: babies become pigs, a grin becomes a cat, and words slip away from their conventional meanings. Alice aimlessly wanders through a world with

endless halls and locked doors, where guides blithely issue wrong directions, hindering her progress and adding to the chaos. As the Cat muses:

.... 'we're all mad here, I'm mad. You're mad.'
'How do you know I'm mad?' said Alice.
'You must be,' said the Cat, 'or you
wouldn't have come here.'

But Alice is, after all, a classic comic text in which discourse is manipulated and characters and situations are exaggerated. The child reader must engage in a game where his metalinguistic awareness is strained and the boundary between reality and make-believe is stretched to its fullest. How does the child share the writer's particular kind of joke in Alice? In many cases, he doesn't. Carroll's mathematical and logical mind creates paradoxes that leave the child floundering in a maze of linguistic references. We know that, as an Oxford don, living and working in an academic community, Carroll found kindred souls with whom to share his intellectually stimulating tale. We can only assume that the adults of Carroll's time, and the adults of every generation following, read it to their children, helping them to learn the rules of Carroll's literary game.

a. Comic Discourse in Alice

Stewart's analysis of nonsense-making techniques finds a prototype in Alice. Beginning with reversals and inversions, the entire text is itself a reversal of the accepted patterns of the

common sense world. The reversal of word forms and meanings, a linguistic nonsense-making technique, is a favorite of Carroll's.

... 'but I know I have to beat time when I learn music.' 'Ah! that accounts for it,' said the Hatter. 'He won't stand beating.'.....

The technique of arrangement and rearrangement in a closed field uses conventional boundaries but substitutes freely within the closed field. Carroll utilizes a game within a game (croquet within a game of cards) and thereby uses an artificial metonymic structure to create a metonymic structure. The boundary of the game is closed while incongruous elements within are substituted; players are inanimate, while elements are animate.

The portmanteau, a combination of two words within one meaning (Freud's condensation), was invented by Carroll and represents the experimental stage of the child's language (Schilder). Found principally in Through the Looking Glass, its classic illustration is 'Jabberwocky.'

'Twas brillig, and the slithy toves
Did gyre and gimble in the wabe;
All mimsy were the borogoves,
And the mome raths outgrave.

'Beware the Jabberwock, my son!
The jaws that bite, the claws that catch!
Beware the Jubjub bird, and shun
The frumious Bandersnatch!

As Humpty Dumpty explains:

'That's enough to begin with,' Humpty Dumpty interrupted: 'there are plenty of hard words there. "Brillig" means four o'clock in the afternoon -- the time when you begin broiling things for dinner.' 'That'll do very well,' said Alice: 'and "slithy?" 'Well, "slithy" means "lithe" and slimy.' "Lithe is the same as "active." You see it's like a portmanteau -- there are two meanings packed into one word.'

The trick with 'Jabberwocky' is that the syntax follows the usual rules so the listener or reader believes it makes sense. This is the classic case of the nonsense sentence which retains its grammatical form while fracturing its content. The technique of inverting classes serves to emphasize the make-believe and move away from reality. Both turning the mechanical into the human and animate elements (hedgehogs as croquet balls and flamingoes as mallets) and turning inanimate playing cards into animate players involve inversion of normal expectancies and succeed in puzzling Alice.

The chief difficulty Alice found at first was in managing her flamingo: she succeeded in getting its body tucked away, comfortably enough, under her arm, with its legs hanging down, but generally, just as she got its neck nicely straightened out it would twist itself around and look up in her face

Carroll plays with boundaries of the common sense world with the alternate growing and shrinking of Alice. The child entertains the notion of growing as part of reality. 'Big' means 'grown up' as the adults he knows. 'Big' in Alice is gigantic, an exaggeration of normal growth patterns. Shrinking, a miniaturization of person, is

not part of the child's world. People grow taller not smaller. The use of these impossible physical feats challenges the limits of everyday life and forces the child to set new boundaries for Alice's world.

Carroll plays with the boundaries of discourse by challenging the prose form with his calligram of the mouse's tale. The conventional expected form becomes the unexpected and the attention of the reader is forced to the shape of the print on the page, adding a spacial dimension to the temporal act of reading.

Carroll uses the disruption of conversation to create simultaneous worlds and move away from the direction and logic of everyday life. The participants' gaps of knowledge create a random purposelessness. Carroll uses the verbal pun to change the subject and disrupt the narrative.

'That's the reason they're called lessons,' the Gryphon remarked: 'because they lessen from day to day.'

This was quite a new idea to Alice, and she thought it over a little before she made her next remark. 'Then the eleventh day must have been a holiday?' 'Of course it was,' said the Mock Turtle.

'And how did you manage on the twelfth?' Alice went on eagerly.

'That's enough about lessons,' the Gryphon interrupted in a very decided tone: 'tell her something about the games now.'

Parody, a form of arrangement and rearrangement in a closed field, mocks the original. In his poetic parodies, Carroll inverts the usual poetic form of content over form to form over content. The poems in Alice all parody didactic poems so popular during the

seventeenth and eighteenth centuries and reflect Carroll's negative reaction to this didacticism. They can only be appreciated when read with the original showing Carroll's strong denials.

The Old Man's Comforts and How He Gained Them
Robert Southey

'You are old, Father William,' the young man cried,
The few locks which are left you are grey;
You are hale, Father William, a hearty old man,
Now tell me the reason, I pray.'

'In the days of my youth,' Father William replied,
'I remembered that youth would fly fast,
And abused not my health and my vigour at first,
That I never might need them at last.'

You Are Old, Father William
Lewis Carroll

'You are old, Father William,' the young man said,
'And your hair has become very white;
And yet you incessantly stand on your head --
Do you think, at your age, it is right?'

'In my youth,' Father William replied to his son,
'I feared it might injure the brain;
But now that I'm perfectly sure I have none,
Why, I do it again and again.'

Southey, giving a lesson on how to live to a ripe old age, preaches prudent care to one's health during youth. Carroll, in a parody mercilessly mocking Southey, refers to absurdities like standing on one's head as one of the factors in achieving old age. Carroll's meaningless morals only serve to point up the prim morality of Southey's poem. The parodies of popular 19th century poems can only be understood by those who know the original works, certainly an assumption made by the author. Twentieth century children find their humor obscure.

In addition to Stewart's analysis of techniques for making discourse humorous, there are other forms of linguistic play that underline the child's need for a metalinguistic awareness.

The free use of homonyms implies that the reader can identify which form is used through the context of the sentence and that the reader is familiar with the words and their meanings.

'Mine is a long and a sad tale!' said the Mouse,
turning to Alice and sighing.
'It is a long tail, certainly,' said Alice,
looking down with wonder at the mouse's tail;
'but why do you call it sad?'

The play on double meanings of words suggests that the reader knows that words may have more than one meaning and that the multiple meanings have been learned.

.... 'I'll soon make you dry enough!'
.... 'This is the driest thing I know.'
.... William the Conqueror, whose
cause was favored by the pope!...

Adults, whose metalinguistic ability has been more fully developed, delight in the preponderance of linguistic play. Children, although happily transported into the wonder of Alice's fantasy world, once there, are confused by a topsy-turvy linguistic world.

The children to whom this writer read a portion of Alice, 'The Mock Turtle's Story,' found nothing funny in a section crammed full of linguistic play and puns, although they found it entertaining. The eight and nine year olds, both British and American, understood

several of the puns on multiple meanings of words (lessons/lessen, tortoise/taught us) but missed other more implicit word plays.

'a conger eel who was the 'Drawling master' and taught Drawling, Stretching and Fainting in Coils; a Classical master who was an 'old crab' and taught Laughing and Grief.'

Many of the children recognized Carroll's four branches of arithmetic in disguise (Ambition, Distraction, Uglification, and Derision) but none had any understanding of the parody forms. None recognized "Mystery, ancient and modern" or "Seaography" as ingenious word plays on academic studies, yet all identified 'reeling and writhing' as reading and writing. Clearly, what is in the realm of the child's world is perceived, but when Carroll moves too far into language games that are beyond them, they are lost. The fun in playing with language is achieved only when you understand the game as, surely, Carroll's contemporaries, the Oxford dons and their families, did.

b. Comic Characters and Situations in Alice

Thus far I have been talking about the discourse in Alice and how Carroll muddles the world in the story, extending the boundaries of a possible world so that the characters in the story, and therefore the reader, have to play the game of the text, and not expect the real world to be seen through it. But Carroll also does this through his characters and situations. Alice, the logical one, is set amidst a collection of absurd characters creating a paradox.

Alice's logic continually emphasizes the illogicality of the others making their incongruous speech and actions more vivid.

'If everybody minded their own business,' the Duchess said in a hoarse growl, 'the world would go round a deal faster than it does.'

'Which would not be an advantage,' said Alice.....

'Just think of what work it would make with the day and night. You see the earth takes twenty-four hours to turn around on its axis, --

'Talking of axes,' said the Duchess, 'chop off her head!'

The mixture of animals with human characteristics and the grotesque creations like the Gryphon and the Mock Turtle add to the general ludicrous quality of the text. The characters not only speak strangely, but look and act strangely. In a sense, they are all clowns, performing in a kind of supernatural circus while Alice is the proverbial 'straight man.'

Up to this point, children's funny texts have, for the most part, been poetry, with an eye to simply amusing the young. Carroll has remade the mold in psychological, linguistic, and narrative terms. Writers who followed Carroll are humorous because they picked up his ideas and break textual boundaries in their own way.

4. After Alice: 1875-1945

With Alice, and those books of fantasy that followed, children were set free in a fantastic, highly imaginative world with unusual characters, events, and language. The child, having achieved mastery of the real world can enjoy the playful machinations that

literary fantasies provide. The release of imaginative fiction in the 19th century made way not only for the resurgence of the old fairy tales but a new wave of modern fairy tales and animal fantasies. John Rowe Townsend suggests two main types of anthropomorphic stories: those in which animals have been humanized and those in which the animals retain their identity. The division is not always as simple as that. Often humanized animals who think and speak and socialize freely with humans retain some clearly animal characteristics: lack of accepted social graces, or the inability to conceptualize fairly simple ideas or operate elementary machinery. Paddington Bear is one humanized animal who has a paw in both worlds. Child characters have been traditionally set among fanciful adults or animals retaining enough realistic characteristics to allow the reader to relate to them (Alice, The Water Babies). In addition to fantastic characters and language play, fabulous situations are part of humorous books: Alice falls down a rabbit hole and embarks on an improbable adventure, Tom, the chimney sweep, runs away, is drowned, and becomes a water baby. Two twentieth century texts are examples of classical humorous books for children. Both are fantasies, and both appeal, as Alice does, to adults and children. In addition, both The Wind in the Willows and Winnie-the-Pooh were written for children, also following Alice's pattern. While Carroll introduces children to the literary tradition of the adult world, both Grahame and Milne offer children their world with new boundaries.

a. The Wind in the Willows (1908)

Like Lewis Carroll's work, Grahame's whimsical text contains some of his philosophies about life, namely the encroachment of the life of the city on the country. The reader is meant to share with the writer the preference for the idyllic. Through the eyes of Ratty, we come to see the author's views. How, then, does Grahame manipulate boundaries to create humor? Unlike Carroll, he keeps the narrative form and uses the characters to create the humor. Talking animals in a quasi-realistic background, as I noted in the texts before Alice, are familiar and comical to the young. All the same, it is Grahame's way of breaking the accepted traditions of the commonsense world. The characters and their actions are the center of the fun. Through Toad, with his grand home and shiny car, Grahame mocks the wealthy leisure class of any era. He is Grahame's clown, the character whose speech and actions are laughable.

Toad sat straight down in the middle of the dusty road, his legs stretched out before him, and stared fixedly in the direction of the disappearing motor-car. He breathed short, his face wore a placid, satisfied expression, and at intervals he faintly murmured "Poop-poop!"

As in Alice, the logic of the other characters, Ratty and Mole, make Toad all the more absurd.

"He's quite hopeless. I give it up -- when we get to the town we'll go to the railway station, and with luck we may pick up a train there that'll get us back to River Bank to-night. And if ever you catch me going a-pleasuring with this provoking animal again!"

b. Winnie-the-Pooh (1926)

Milne interrupts the conventional narrative and plays with discourse through the use of the calligram (in this case, words following the shape of a tree) which diverts the reader's attention to shape rather than content. He also breaks the narrative by shifting abruptly from prose to poetry. Each time Pooh sings a song or recites a poem our attention to the narrative is disrupted and we are further removed from the everyday world and made more aware of the fantastic. Further reforming the boundaries between reality and fantasy, Milne, as storyteller, inserts himself into the narrative in order to allow Christopher to question events in the tale.

("Was that me?" said Christopher Robin in an awed voice, hardly daring to believe it.
"That was you."

Christopher Robin said nothing, but his eyes got larger and larger, and his face got pinker and pinker.)

"And didn't I give him anything?" asked Christopher Robin sadly.

"Of course you did," I said. "You gave him -- don't you remember -- a little -- a little --"

"I gave him a box of paints to paint things with."

"That was it."

The story within a story framework disrupts the narrative and produces simultaneous tales within the same space. Deviating from humanized animals, Milne uses humanized toys, an inversion of classes, to create the same comic effect. All are child-like and carry few animal traits: Pooh likes honey and Piglet likes haycorns. Unlike Grahame's book, which is deeply layered with philosophical meaning, Winnie-the-Pooh is a simple story told

through the writer's eyes with the help of Christopher Robin. It is its simplicity which makes it so appealing. It is filled with comic characters who find themselves in improbable situations plus a delightful play with language.

While Milne's manipulation of the boundaries of discourse enhance the comic, it is Pooh, the lovable clown, in whom the humor is concentrated. His comical mishaps (falling from a tree into a gorse-bush) are made funnier by the whimsical little songs he sings at the moment of peril.

'It's a very funny thought that if Bears were Bees. They'd build their nests at the bottom of trees. And that being so (if the Bees were Bears).

Both The Wind in the Willows and Winnie-the-Pooh offer the child his commonsense world with new boundaries. In this world, animals and toys speak and act like humans, while living in a realistic world, as the child knows it. As we shall see, this kind of humorous text continues to appear in contemporary children's literature. These earlier texts, read to the young child, teach him how humor works, and when he is able to read texts with similar comic techniques, he is familiar with the form. Alice is quite a different story. In using techniques from the adult world of literature, Carroll prepares the child for what lies ahead. The fragmented text crammed with eccentric characters and linguistic play prepares the growing reader for the classic comic techniques of a Dickens or a Sterne, deeply layered and complex.

Both The Wind in the Willows and Winnie-the-Pooh offer an escape into that wonderful world of fantasy where fears are allayed and children triumph. The adult animals of Grahame's world with their foibles, fears, and indecisions offer the child the chance to see that adults as well as children are not necessarily masters of their own worlds. Christopher Robin is the triumphant hero of his story. He is the one who leads the animals out of their impossible situations, the only one who can spell; he is the leader, the thinker, the one with whom every child can identify.

c. Edward Lear

Edward Lear, father of the informative nonsensical limerick, was a contemporary of Lewis Carroll and published his Book of Nonsense in 1846. Like Lewis Carroll, he wrote the most enduring nonsense poetry. Lear's limericks are five lines in length often with the name of a person or a place in the first line that is repeated in the fifth line. The subject of the rhymes is pure nonsense manipulated with puns and/or plays-on-words.

Nonsense

ii

There was an Old Lady of Chertsey,
Who made a remarkable curtsey;
She twirled round and round,
Till she sank underground,
Which distressed all the people of Chertsey

vi

There was an Old Person of Gretna.
Who rushed down the crater of Etna;
When they said, 'Is it hot?'
He replied, 'No, it's not.'
That mendacious Old Person of Gretna.

Lear's limericks offer a kind of circularity going back to the first line at the end of each verse. There is no sense of ending, rather a 'back to the beginning' feeling that extends the limerick into infinity. Each has the same form, the same pattern, and the same purposeless chatter. The closed form of the limerick sets boundaries but the limitless number of verses breaks the boundary by the absence of a fixed ending thereby creating a paradox.

The Alphabet, which provides a closed field as well as a set of fixed elements, is a ready-made system for nonsense. The common-sense system allows the rearrangement or substitution of elements creating nonsense within the closed field.

An Alphabet (Edward Lear)

A

A was once an apple pie,
Pidy
Widy
Tidy
Pidy
Nice insidy
Applie Pie!

B

B was once a little bear,
Beary!
Wary!
Hairy!
Beary!
Taky cary!
Little Bear!

C
 C was once a little cake,
 Caky
 Baky
 Maky
 Caky
 Taky Caky,
 Little Cake!

In the 'B' verse Lear has not only played with the sounds but with the spellings as well. The ear, ar, and air spellings that have the same sounds were all incorporated into one verse.

d. Hillaire Belloc

The nonsense tradition of Lewis Carroll and Edward Lear was carried on by Hillaire Belloc (1870-1953). Belloc produced parodies that were strong reactions to Victorian didacticism very like those found in Alice.

HENRY KING
 WHO CHEWED BITS OF STRING, AND WAS
 EARLY CUT OFF IN DREADFUL AGONIES.

The Chief Defect of Henry King
 Was chewing little bits of String.
 At last he swallowed some which tied
 Itself in ugly Knots inside.
 Physicians of the Utmost Fame
 Were called at once; but when they came
 They answered, as they took their Fees,
 "There is no Cure for this Disease.
 Henry will very soon be dead."
 His Parents stood about his Bed

Lamenting his Untimely Death,
 When Henry, with his Latest Breath,
 Cried -- "Oh, my Friends, be warned by me,
 That Breakfast, Dinner, Lunch and Tea
 Are all the Human Frame requires ... "
 With that the Wretched Child expires.

Belloc's parody substitutes elements from the didactic poetry of Ann and Jane Taylor and Isaac Watts (Townsend, 1974) with the sad, though nonsensical, tale of Henry King. In a sense parody twists the boundaries of didactic poetry by substituting different elements within the conventional framework. It stands in an incongruous relation to the parodied texts. In parody there is a shifting away from content to form that creates nonsense through the manipulation of the institutions of common sense.

Through the application of Susan Stewart's analysis of nonsense-making techniques to children's poetry and prose, we have discovered, as with adult literature, how writers play with the boundaries of reality and fantasy drawing the reader into the writer's world by means of a shared awareness of what constitutes 'fun' in literature. The reader is so used to looking through a text to the real world that he forgets that reading is a game with rules. To read a humorous book, the child has to learn to 'play' the text, following the author's rules. What I have done thus far, and will continue to do in my analysis of classic humorous texts, is to offer an exposition of the author's rules. Although Stewart's analysis is applicable to many funny books for children, in most cases the books are fantasy. As I indicated earlier in this chapter, Stewart's proposals cannot explain the humor in realistic stories. Through the categories of character, situation, and discourse, humor in realistic stories is achieved.

5. Post 1945

With Lewis Carroll and Alice the traditions of children's literature were begun. More than a century later writers of children's books still employ the same techniques to produce humorous literature. Through Stewart's analysis of techniques we have discovered that, in fact, there is a 'classic' funny book. That book includes the setting and resetting of boundaries between the commonsense and the nonsense worlds. In it, animals and humans share the same universe of discourse, commonsense patterns of everyday life are reversed or inverted, simultaneous elements exist in the same narrative space, spatial or temporal boundaries are suspended, the expected turns into the unexpected, some mismatch and exaggeration of characters and/or situations exists, and linguistic play is practiced. This is traditionally a fantasy book where boundaries are more readily discernable.

By the middle of the 20th century, realistic stories were an established genre. It would seem probable that, with heightened interest in psychology and the need for the child's emotional release from his everyday stresses, stories served as a natural place for children to see that these problems were experienced by others and free them from their subconscious anxieties. Realistic humorous stories allow the release of anxieties created both by the child and by the society in which he lives. The child sets boundaries according to his experience with the 'rules' and resets them with each journey into the fictive.

The second half of the 20th century presents a wealth of humorous books, both fanciful and realistic, as a play place for children. We shall examine classic examples of both poetry and prose and explore the way in which the story 'frame' is learned.

a. Twentieth Century Parody

1. Poetry

Poetry is a great equalizer of adults and children. While some is clearly beyond the understanding of the child, other poetry written expressly for children is clever enough for adults to willingly share. Beginning in the oral tradition with nursery rhymes and alphabet songs, and eventually leading to poetic parodies and the pun in rhyme, children have developed an appreciation of the humorous verse which is shared with the adults in their world. America's Ogden Nash is one such poet who appeals to adults and children. Like Lewis Carroll, children's first exposure to his linguistic gymnastics comes through hearing his poems read aloud. Nash's poetic gems are sheer joy and are good illustrations of the technique of reversals and inversions. Nash also parodies recognizable forms and in the following poem he debunks America's system of road signs. He inverts the usual poetic form over content negating the form that he parodies and transforming the meaning.

I'll Take the High Road Commission

In between the route marks
And the shaving rhymes,
Black and yellow markers
Comment on the times.

All along the highway
Hear the signs discourse:

MEN
SLOW
WORKING
;
SADDLE
CROSSING
HORSE

Cryptic crossroad preachers
Proffer good advice,
Helping wary drivers
Keep out of Paradise.

Transcontinental sermons,
Transcendental talk:

SOFT
CAUTION
SHOULDERS

CROSS
CHILDREN
WALK

Wiseest of the proverbs,
Truest of the talk,
Have I found the dictum:

CROSS
CHILDREN
WALK

When Adam took the highway
He left his sons a guide:

CROSS
CHILDREN
WALK

;

CHEERFUL
CHILDREN
RIDE

.

This poem also plays with boundaries reforming the conventional poetic form. Instead of the usual verse form, Nash inserts an unexpected variation, the calligram, which opens the text to multiple interpretations. The reader is made aware of the shape of the print on the page adding a spacial perception to the normally temporal act of reading. This disruption of the conventional poetic techniques flaunts the possibility of the existence of more than one element in the same space. This is a simultaneity, a combining of disparate elements within the same text, in this case the structure of road signs combined with verse.

Nash revels in punning and creates the ultimate pun by applying an alternate meaning to a word and then creating his own road sign.

CROSS
CHILDREN
WALK

CHEERFUL
CHILDREN
RIDE

The whole idea of the sign existing as a precaution is negated by Nash's forcing the reader into the pattern and meaning he has generated.

In Nash's poem 'The Llama,' he uses the homophones llama/lama to fashion simultaneous meanings and outrageous puns. By altering the pronunciation of the word 'alarm' with a New York inflection he introduces a new Nashism: lllama. The use of the footnote which is

offered simultaneously and absurdly with his poem creates an additonal punning technique.

THE LAMA

The one-1 lama,
He's a priest.
The two-1 llama,
He's a beast.

And I will bet
A silk pajama
There isn't any
Three-1 lllama.*

*The author's attention has been called to a type of conflagration known as a three-alarmer. Pooh.

Though basically different kinds of humorous writers, both Nash, and his predecessor, Lewis Carroll, invite the reader to share their make-beleive^{ie} worlds: Carroll's, an elaborate fantasy with eccentric characters engaged in absurd activities, Nash, his own eccentric

character, the 'little man' of American humor, taking out his frustrations on the everyday world around him. He turns sense into nonsense that eventually makes its own sense.

2. Prose

As society's concerns change, what adults take seriously changes. Parodies, then, become the way by which writers give either a child's eye view of the adult world or let the child know what is serious. The writer accomplishes this by devising means of parodying (inside the 'frame') or 'frame' making (parodying the frame). Once children understand how the joke is played in character, situation, or discourse, they have also learned literary conventions, that is, the 'rules of the game' of reading funny books. The author has to do two things: draw a literary frame and parody or break it. He has to let the reader know that the 'frame' is being broken and does so through character, situation, or discourse. One of these is broken at a time in the unexpected or the incongruous. The author counts on a known literary frame (songs, poems, folk or fairy tales) and offers a parody.

The folk or fairy tale is a popular parodic form. Children learn this literary genre at an early age and are very familiar with it by the time they reach school age. James Thurber's 'The Princess and the Tin Box' (1948) offers a modern day princess with a 'nursery like Cartier's window.' It is a perfect parody of the traditional fairy tale beginning with 'Once upon a time' and ending with a moral. But in this case the moral is a comic conclusion to a comic

tale. The princess shows an innate fondness for riches, unlike so many of the folk and fairy tale princesses who tend to choose the poor, but handsome and honest, loving prince. Thurber's princess disdains the poor prince and selects the one whose gift to her was a platinum-and-sapphire jewel box.

"The way I figure it," she said, "is this. It is a very large and expensive box, and when I am married, I will meet many admirers who will give me precious gems with which to fill it to the top."

Thurber's moral is:

All those who thought the princess was going to select the tin box filled with worthless stones instead of one of the other gifts will kindly stay after class and write one hundred times on the blackboard, "I would rather have a hunk of aluminum silicate than a diamond necklace."

The moral adds another incongruous twist to an already incongruous parody of a familiar form.

'The Three Billy Goats Gruff' is a familiar tale with the traditional villain represented by the troll, a mean and ugly monster who lives beneath the bridge constantly threatening the goats with extinction. Righteousness prevails and the largest of the Billy goats disposes of the troll. Alvin Granowsky and Morton Botel (1973) parodied this tale with the story told from the troll's point of view, 'The Poor Old Troll.' The entire story is reversed making the troll the hapless victim, who was merely joking and meant no harm to the goats.

'Just look at my face! Would you guess that I was once a handsome troll? I'm black and blue all over. And who knows how many broken bones I have! After what that crazy goat did to me, I'm lucky to be alive!'

Alan Coren's The Lone Arthur (1978) is a parody of the traditional western folk tale so popular in the United States. Retaining the folk tale frame it begins:

'Once upon a time, about a hundred years ago, in the very middle of the United States, there was a rather remarkable place called Dodge City.'

The hero is a young boy, parodied on the radio and comic book hero, The Lone Ranger, who solves crimes, catches criminals, fights pirates, and is generally a super-hero like his namesake. The fun is in his studious, bespectacled, incongruous guise and his accomplishment of deeds contradictory to that appearance. Since parody emphasizes the text and the taking over of one text by another, it is a kind of metafiction, a fiction about a fiction. Parodies appear as fractured proverbs, inverted folk or fairy tales, or songs whose frames contain novel and incongruous lyrics. Parody can only succeed when the commonsense form is known (the rules of society). Literary parody makes ^{sense} ~~parody~~ only if the frame that is parodied is known (the literary rules of the game). Often, instead of parodying a familiar frame or its content, certain segments of the literary are mocked. The traditional fairy tale figures are reversed resulting in incompetent kings, formidable princesses, and

reluctant dragons. The reversal of fictional characters who normally arouse fear or hostility creates parodic figures. Nervous ghosts (The Great Ghost Rescue, Eva Ibbotson), kind and friendly witches (Spell Me a Witch, Barbara Willard), and benign burglars (Robber Hopsika, Paul Biegel) are parodic jokes that fit into varied frames. Situations are also parodied by reversals of accepted roles. Grimble (Clement Freud) places a small boy in the role of the parent by making him responsible for seeing that order prevails. Homer Price (Robert McCloskey) parodies the small town mid-Western life of the United States. Exaggerations of language are often parodying regional speech. Homer Price offers characters spouting magnified Western drawl, and Sid Fleischman's McBroom and family speak in the abbreviated style of the American farmer. The Phantom Tollbooth (Norton Juster) uses words, numbers, cliches, and proverbs in a literal sense creating linguistic parodic incongruities.

I suggest that all of the parodic techniques are derived from earlier literature, and deserve more than a sub-titled part of one of Stewart's main techniques (arrangement and rearrangement in a closed field). Parody has continued as a literary form and applied to children's books as a major comedic technique. The mocking of the conventional literary form, the reversal of the features of customary fictional characters, situations, or discourse will be noted as I continue my examination of children's humorous literature in my empirical study. We shall find, as we explore contemporary children's literature, that parodies appear in many forms. It is

through constant exposure to the parodic form that children learn the frame of humorous literature.

b. Picture Books

Pictures let the child in on the joke and prepare them for the literary joke. Not to be confused with books whose art serves to illustrate the text, picture books tell a story of their own often adding humorous concepts that the texts do not convey; a kind of tongue-in-cheek humor. Both in Great Britain and in America, this genre includes quality books by innovative authors. Pat Hutchins' Rosie's Walk (1968), while written for young children is captivating enough to charm older readers. The text, containing only one sentence, tells us that 'Rosie the hen went for a walk across the yard, around the pond, over the haycock, past the mill, through the fence, under the beehives, and got back in time for dinner;' only 32 words spread over 27 pages. What the text doesn't tell us is that Rosie is pursued by a scatterbrained fox, who, each time he is ready to pounce on her, experiences a series of comic mishaps. The humor is deeper than that, however, for we are well aware that Rosie is completely unaware of the danger as she blithely goes on her way. The reader experiences a real sense of superiority as he and the writer share the joke. What is implicitly shared is the premise that the fox is usually a sly and clever fellow making his disasters even funnier.

John Burningham's Come Away From the Water, Shirley (1977) is another such tongue-in-cheek picture book. Shirley and her family

go to the beach and we are treated to two views of the day: one, in mother's continuing admonitions in the text, and the other, without text, Shirley's day at the beach. While mother utters prosaic warnings, Shirley is off sailing the seas, being captured by pirates, walking the plank, and finding buried treasure. The humor 'beneath the page' is Shirley's ability to completely ignore her mother's admonishments and embark on an imaginary adventure. Burningham's ingenious juxtaposition of Shirley's fantasies and her mother's commonplace remarks is a brilliant technique for formulating picture-book humor.

Books like these aid the child's understanding of the need to laugh at life's perils and allow him the freedom to do so.

In his picture book, Father Christmas (1978), Raymond Briggs takes the accepted folkloric treatment of Santa and reverses it. Father Christmas is grumpy, dreading the cold night ahead on Christmas Eve, and dreaming of a warm, sunny beach. He listens to weather reports on the radio, reads the newspaper as he breakfasts, and prepares his thermos of tea for the long journey ahead. No 'ho, ho, hos,' here, but comments like, "Bloom the blooming snow!" The problems he meets getting past television aeri-als, into igloos, caravans and lighthouses are exaggerated and illustrate a modern Santa coping with the problems of a difficult job, far from the jolly figure children have come to know and love.

These picture books and cartoon comics as well are a play place for children in which the mismatches are identified and serve as an introduction to humor in the literary text.

Where have we come and where are we going? I have proposed that children's funny books continue in the tradition of classic comic literature. Each writer, in some way, breaks traditional boundaries of conventional poetic or narrative forms in order to create the incongruous, the heart of humor. Through early speech play, the child becomes socially aware of the difference between commonsense and nonsense. Later, as his metalinguistic awareness increases, the child learns the 'frame' of the oral joke: the riddle, the pun, the tall tale. Parody, the ongoing comic form, begins with songs, poems, and fractured fairy tales. As the child learns to play with oral language, he learns techniques that will help him with the written. The child must be both cognitively and linguistically ready to recognize the 'frame' of the oral or written joke. In order to understand the literary joke, the child must share the author's idea of what is funny. Through the use of character, situation, and discourse, writers substitute the unexpected for the expected, thereby creating the incongruous.

Thus far I have been making theoretical proposals. In order to test these proposals, I have gone directly to the children. I move next to my empirical study to try to discover when the child is cognitively and linguistically aware of the literary joke frame and if he shares the author's idea of what is funny.

IX. THE EMPIRICAL STUDY

How, then, do all of the areas I have related to children's humor effect our understanding of their reactions to funny books?

In earlier chapters, my inquiries into social, psychological, cultural, and linguistic factors suggest that these processes impact upon the child's ability to 'get the joke.' Initially, their knowledge of 'the rules' of the commonsense world must be internalized before they can play with the boundaries and reform them for an acceptance of the fictive world. Next, their appreciation of the incongruous, the earliest form of humor to develop, should be responsible for a cogent reaction to humor based on incongruity. Third, a sufficiently developed metalinguistic ability by the children in the study, aged eight and nine, should permit comprehension of the verbal play in the narratives. Fourth, certain unconscious psychological forces should trigger predictable responses to relationships and situations in the stories: repressed resentment of an adult-controlled world, repressed aggressions toward siblings, and a sense of superiority toward less competent individuals. Finally, knowing 'the rules' of society and what is acceptable behavior should make narratives that include unacceptable behavior comical.

I shall examine each area separately and propose its relationship to humorous books for children.

A. Factors Influencing the Child's Reaction to Humorous Literature.

1. The Psychological

Humor of incongruity has been identified as the earliest and most dominant type of humor recognized by children (Shultz, McGhee). Of the books in our study (16), twelve have incongruous characters and thirteen use incongruous situations. Obviously writers of children's funny books are well aware of the child's responsiveness to incongruity.

The release of repressed aggressions that has been related to children's joking also finds an outlet in children's funny books. In fantasy books that include themes of abnormal bodily change (Alice, Treehorn), the child can release his emotional fear of these changes while actually enjoying the effects of that change in the fictive. Writers understand these fears and exploit them.

The acknowledged superiority of adults forces an unconscious repression of the negative feelings it produces. Books like Grimble, Alice, and Pippi Longstocking treat this subject by creating fictional worlds in which children are alone and away from adult-imposed rules. Both the fear that this freedom gives rise to and the inherent problems of the freedom itself are released in stories such as these.

Repressed ^gagressions toward siblings is acknowledged and released by writers who create stories normalizing these feelings. Ramona, Tales of a Fourth Grade Nothing, Ordinary Jack, and Freaky Friday all fall into this category.

Feelings of superiority (Hobbes) emerge when a child recognizes his ability to accomplish what a fictional character has failed to attain. Writers utilize this knowledge in a variety of ways: Paddington Bear, The Wombles, and the wolf in Clever Polly in their childlike moments create chaos and confusion with their lack of information about the human world and its 'rules;' the absent-minded Professor Branestawm with five pairs of spectacles on his head and the inability to find one pair moves the child to shout, 'You're wearing them!'; the inability of Ordinary Jack to achieve skill in any area; the naivete and incompetence of the younger children in Ramona the Pest and Tales of a Fourth Grade Nothing.

a. Play

Play in the fictive world takes two paths: one in cognitive development (based on Piaget's symbolic play, see psychological section) and the other is the awareness of make-believe. Cognitive development includes the recognition of the incongruity of the joke or funny story. The awareness of make-believe is a combination of knowing the 'rules' and the stored experiences that come from that knowledge. Each time a child is drawn into a fictional world he develops the ability to assimilate and accommodate that new experience into his stored collection. He becomes more skilled at how writers create their works and becomes familiar with the various 'frames' that are used. The fantasy tale with its extraordinary characters and situations, that plays with the boundaries between the real and the make-believe and the commonsense and the nonsense, is an early part of children's lore that continues through

independently read stories like Paddington and Clever Polly. Realistic narratives play with and reset the boundaries of the child's world by exaggerating character traits, actions, or speech, commonplace situations or ordinary language (Ordinary Jack, Homer Price, Grimble). Homer volunteers to help in his uncle's doughnut shop only to be caught up in an adventure with a runaway doughnut machine. Mr. Popper and his family take on a penguin as a household pet and end up nurturing an entire family of penguins.

The idea of play in the affective, as well as the cognitive, domain is put forth by Britton, Winnicott, and Vygotsky. This so-called 'other area' where the child plays in the imaginative world of fiction is enhanced by writers who create this make-believe world where the child is free to fulfill his need for imaginative play. In effect, he escapes the pressures and restrictions of both the 'rules' of the outside world and his inner needs through freedom of literature. Funny books create a special kind of freedom with an aura of fun and laughter.

2. The Linguistic

As I discussed in the chapter on language, many researchers have proposed that the language of joking is a developmental process related to the growth of cognitive skills as cited by Piaget (McGhee, Horgan, Shultz & Pilon, Prentice & Fatham, Sutton-Smith). Before the child can recognize and reproduce the joke form, he must have established an implicit awareness of a system of rules governing language, that is, a metalinguistic ability. Further, the

language researchers previously discussed have indicated that the resolution of the joke and riddle occurs sometime during Piaget's concrete operational period. The children in my study, aged eight and nine, fall into that period and should generally recognize and understand the puns and jokes used in the stories they read.

3. The Sociological

I shall propose that a certain portion of the reaction to the group readings must be attributed to the social setting of the group itself. The children, as individuals, will be anxious to comply with the rest of the group members. Therefore, how much of the response will be based on the humor in the books and how much will be based on peer pressure can only be conjecture. What we can discern is how the writer has manipulated the accepted conventions of society to create funny characters and situations and whether or not the participants share that play with boundaries.

B. The Group Study

1. The Situation

My study had two main divisions: one conducted with British children in Great Britain, and one conducted with American children in the United States. My decision to examine humorous books with both British and American children rose out of a feeling that, children from different cultures would respond in dissimilar ways to funny books. Certainly, educators to whom I spoke about my plan, both in Great Britain and the United States, offered a similar opinion. In addition to being interested in how the children would

react to the selected books, I was especially interested in how British children would react to books by American writers and how American children would react to books by British writers.

2. The British Children

The study was conducted at the Ibstock Place School, a public school, Roehampton, Mr. Aidan Warlow, Headmaster. A second form of eight year old children was selected by Mr. Warlow as one whose children and teacher he felt would happily cooperate in being part of the research. The entire class of 22 children participated in the study. The children were middle-class and were exposed to books and reading both at school and at home. The teacher, a young dedicated individual, read to the class regularly and had a good in-class library from which the children borrowed books freely. Often children were gathered around the book corner during free time sitting together and reading. The subjects were mainstream dominant culture children who responded eagerly to all of the stories introduced. I recognize that this is not a representative sample, but this was not, nor intended to be, a study seeking to prove a hypothesis. My interest was in children and their reactions to funny books. To my knowledge, there has been no other study like this one. Others have conducted more formal research seeking to question large numbers of children about funny books through the use of a questionnaire-type study (Monson, 1966), but there is no record of any anecdotal study made with children and humorous narratives.

I had no knowledge of the level of intelligence of the children. Some had reading difficulties, but in the group setting,

where the children simply listened to stories, the level of reading proficiency had no effect upon the children's reactions.

The physical setting in which the study took place was less than ideal. The children and I sat outside of the classroom and were interrupted occasionally by children from other classes passing by. The children were, in my opinion, able to ignore the distractions and attend to the task at hand. Their enjoyment at hearing stories read aloud was obvious. Groupings in this portion of the study were made randomly by the examiner who had no previous experience with the children.

I recognize that the children were anxious to respond affirmatively to my questions which implicitly suggested that there was humor in the selections by simply asking what the children found funny. Some children in the group setting were more aggressive than others in responding to the stories and attempted to dominate the discussions. Although I was able to control the situation most of the time, there were some occasions when the less aggressive children were dominated by the others.

The group setting provided social pressure to echo the responses of the others. It was not always possible to tell if children really found certain episodes funny or were merely responding to peer pressure.

Books used in the study were chosen prior to the beginning of the study and in some cases children were familiar with the stories.

3. The American Children

The study was conducted at the Chatham Park School, Havertown, Pa., Mr. Richard Shaeffer, principal. The school is public (tax supported) and the children, although middle-class, come from a more widely distributed economic level than the Ibstock School children. The children are mainstream dominant culture children. The 22 children were chosen by their teachers from three different fourth grade classes (nine year olds). It should be noted that a certain bias must exist when teachers are selecting from children with whom they are exceedingly familiar.

Most of the children in the American school were acquainted with the examiner while the English children were not. It is possible, though not probable, that this situation would have made the American children more responsive. The children were exposed to a wide selection of books both in the school library and in in-class libraries as well. Often they carried their library books with them when they came to meet me in order to show me their current free reading books.

Unlike the situation with the British children, I was familiar with the abilities of the American children since I had worked at the school as a reading specialist for five years. Some of the children had been my students, the others I knew from my in-class group teaching of reading. I believe I neither anticipated nor pre-judged the responses of the children since this informal story-reading setting was different from my previous association

with the children in a formal teaching capacity. However, I was aware of the intellectual capacity of some of the children since that information was a part of the history kept by the school on each child's permanent scholastic record.

Influencing both groups was the effect of the other group members on each other. Their familiarity with one another made them feel relaxed and willing to talk and to urge the others to talk to me. There was much nudging, giggling, and encouraging of each other during the discussions. Inaccuracies were corrected and recall was helped by other group members. Much of the talk was experiential rather than as a reaction to the piece read.

'I saw Paddington on TV.'

'My little sister beat me swimming too.'

Certain weaknesses exist in this kind of anecdotal collecting and reporting of information from a group study. The group members feel a necessity to react to the group consensus. The strong child dominates and may often bias the remarks of the others. There is a tendency to get off the subject and indulge in monologues once a child has the attention of the others. However, taking all of these known variables into consideration, I feel that my study has revealed considerable support for my proposals about humor in children's literature.

4. The Books

Group A

The Wombles (Chapter 2, pp. 18-26)

Freaky Friday (Chapter 3, pp.11-17)

Ordinary Jack (Chapter 1, pp.7-15)

Homer-Price (Chapter 3, pp.52-72)

Group B

Paddington Helps Out (Ch. 7, pp. 107-120)

Harriet the Spy (Ch. 2, pp. 15-20)

Alice (Ch. 9, pp. 122-128)

Grimble (Ch. 1, pp. 9-19)

I have suggested in the preceding chapter, that children learn the conventions of literary humor and consequently are able to 'play' the writer's comic game. In the two sections discussing classic literary humor (for the adult and for the child), I proposed that certain techniques have been used by writers to create a tradition of literary humor. Initially, I examined classic comic texts according to Stewart's analysis of how the writer manipulated discourse to create the comic narrative. I then offered my own thesis that, in addition to humorous discourse, writers use odd characters and strange situations to produce a comic narrative. Next, I suggested that Stewart's analysis applies primarily to fantastic texts and that her explanations are not sufficient to analyze the humor of realistic fiction. My own view is that humor

of character or situation is the primary kind of humor found in realistic fiction for children. The books in the study were selected primarily to examine children's reactions to classic literary humor. In addition my desire was to have a good representative selection of humorous books both by British and American writers. My interest in the responses of each group to an author from the other culture made this necessary. The tradition of the anthropomorphic tale was the basis for the selection of both The Wombles and Paddington Helps Out. Children are familiar with and delight in tales about animals over whom they can feel a kind of superiority. The traditions of fantasy and reality as the two kinds of children's funny books motivated the selection of books that were reasonably distributed in both categories.

Since my primary proposal about the humor in children's books is the expectation that character, situation, or discourse is the basis for that humor, the books in the study were distributed among the three categories. Character humor is divided into three sections: humor derived from physical appearance, from the actions of the characters, or from character speech.

Comical physical appearance may include exaggerated facial or body features (big noses or feet), outlandish dress, or a combination of both. Humorous actions by a character or characters can be explicitly enacted (tripping and falling down) or incongruous to the particular character (animals who have human characteristics, children who behave like adults, or continually distracted adults). Humorous speech in characters may involve distortion, repetition, or

dialect, puns and jokes, or derogatory remarks or name-calling.

The physical appearance of comic characters is often responsible for part of their humor. Sometimes by the use of pictures, but often with verbal descriptions alone, a humorous character is highlighted by the way he looks.

His fur was wet and bedraggled and covered in splashes of melting yellow snow. His straw boater, which had never looked its best since it was soaked in Queen's Mere, was now a shadow of its former self and his scarf had two big holes in it. (The Wombles, p. 134).

The actions of characters are responsible for the largest part of character humor since figures are established by means of odd behavior. On one hand, the characters may initiate the humorous action, and on the other, they may be hapless victims of peculiar occurrences.

Before the Browns could stop him, Paddington had grabbed his paw bowl and had thrown the contents over the tray. There was a loud hissing noise and before the astonished gaze of the waiters Mr. Gruber's omelet slowly collapsed into a soggy mess in the bottom of the dish. (p. 118)

When Jack and Mr. Bagthorpe pulled the single available cracker, Zero, who was probably already nervous at being trapped so long under a table surrounded by so many feet and legs, had blown his mind. He had sprung forward, got both sets of paws wound in the tablecloth and pulled the whole lot after him, including the cake.

(Ordinary Jack, p. 31)

The speech of comic characters may derive its humor from foreign or regional dialect or through the use of word and meaning confusion that is a function of the character's personality.

'I had a bit of a phenomenon in the launderette.'
'A phenomenon?' repeated Mrs. Brown.
'But you can't have a phenomenon in a washing machine.'
'I did,' said Paddington firmly. 'And all the water came out.'
(p.105)

The Wombles, Paddington, and Ordinary Jack are books whose humor is based on character. In Paddington, the expectation is that the children will respond to Paddington's odd actions and speech. He is the humanized animal whose actions remain attributable to his animal characteristics, the combination often causing dire results.

Paddington wasn't quite sure what happened next, but as he opened the door a stream of hot, soapy water shot out, nearly knocking his hat off, and as he fell over backwards on the floor most of Mrs. Bird's washing seemed to land on top of his head.

(Paddington, p. 102)

What Michael Bond counts on in Paddington is the sharing of the 'fun' of an animal who speaks and acts like a human and combines a kind of adult/child existence. As an adult, Paddington is free to come and go as he pleases, yet his freedom constantly gets him into trouble. He floods the launderette, bids at an auction sale, and creates havoc cooking in the kitchen. Bond counts on the children seeing the ridiculousness of Paddington's actions and feeling that they know the 'right' way to do what Paddington has bungled.

The Wombles are a different kind of animal. In the devotion of their lives to cleaning up Wimbledon Common, they embody and display all of the good and bad traits characteristic of humans. Uncle Bulgaria is the wise old Womble, the grandfather figure, evoking both affection and fear in the young Wombles. Tobermory is the clever, skilled 'handyman' of the group. Orinoco is the lazy one, and Bungo, the youngster whom everybody loves. Their activities are commonplace yet like humans, they get into situations bordering on the catastrophic.

'That's not the way to use it,' said Orinoco, and he got up out of his nest and took the umbrella from Bungo's paws and opened it up. Now although Orinoco was quite fat (no Womble is what you might call thin, but Orinoco was fatter than most), the wind was exceptionally strong, and the umbrella particularly large, and before Orinoco or Bungo knew quite what was happening Orinoco was being swept over the grass as fast as his short back legs would carry him. (p. 21)

In addition to acting oddly, the Wombles speak oddly and have difficulty understanding some special language usage and its accompanying behavior.

'It's a goluff ball,' said Orinoco.
'What's that?'
'There's a game called goluff. Human Beings play it. They hit those little balls with sticks and shout at each other.'
(p.70)

What Beresford counts on is the reader sharing an awareness of the 'humanness' of the Wombles, while recognizing their inability to

comprehend some basic human concepts, an incongruous combination.

In Ordinary Jack, Helen Cresswell juxtaposes Jack, an ordinary boy, with an extraordinary, eccentric family. Jack, in an attempt to have at least one 'string to his bow,' engages in minor lunacy to achieve his end; he pretends to have 'Visions' which Uncle Parker, his mentor, is to cause to materialize. Even in his role as a visionary Jack maintains a 'reality,' a figure very much like the child who is reading about him. Helen Cresswell is not offering Jack as the comic figure but is asking the child to make his choice. Is Jack the strange one as his family believes, or is it the family that is strange? The children are invited to share with the writer the values that are set out.

Humor of situation involves a major situational oddity that is the primary basis for the humor in the narrative. Harriet the Spy, Grimble, Freaky Friday, and Homer Price are all books that primarily depend upon humor of situation.

In Harriet the Spy, Harriet keeps a secret notebook filled with honest opinions about her parents, friends, and neighbors. The notes are funny, biting, and shrewdly accurate.

Today a new boy arrived. He is so dull no one can remember his name so I have named him The Boy with the Purple Socks. Imagine. Where would he ever find purple socks?

The author counts on the reader understanding the humor in the overall situation of Harriet's notetaking and seeing the humor in her notes as well. Fitzhugh is inviting the reader to judge whether

it is Harriet herself who is funny or the characters about whom she writes.

Grimble is based on an incongruous situation that is identified in the first paragraph of the book.

....Grimble had rather odd parents who were very vague and seldom got anything completely right.

The reader immediately knows this story will involve some incongruous behavior on the part of Grimble's parents.

The child/adult boundary is manipulated in Grimble. At the age of ten, Grimble is left to his own devices while his parents go off on a trip to Peru. This is both a frightening and an exciting prospect. The freedom is there, but with it comes unexpected problems. What is he to eat, what if he is ill, who will see that he goes to school? The result is a mixed-up ludicrous five days written with an indulgent eye toward his irresponsible parents and to Grimble himself who creates chaos as he moves from one comical situation to the other.

The author expects the reader to see the implicit humor in the situation that makes the parents the odd ones, the laughable. They aren't quite sure of his age ('about ten') and leave for Peru without notice. He is inviting the child to indulge in a feeling of superiority toward such illogical adult figures while appreciating Grimble's mastery of the situation.

In Freaky Friday, a mother and daughter exchange bodies and the reader is presented with an opportunity to sample a situation he/she may have entertained: exchanging roles with parents. Parents as adults have freedom and impose upon children the 'rules' they must follow. What would be more fun than changing roles and imposing those rules themselves? Playing with the child/adult boundary is both tantalizing and frightening. If the change is real, the child would then have to take on the responsibilities that accompany it. But in the story, he is free to enjoy it, laugh at the confusion, and return safely to his role as a child. The boundaries formed earlier have been reformed for a fantastical adventure with Annabel.

Homer Price, a book in which each chapter is a self-contained episode, concerns a small town boy who always finds himself at the center of some paradoxical situation. Surrounded by incompetent, distracted adults, Homer usually saves the town from some minor disaster. Like the other situational humor books in the group study, the reader is made aware of the less-than-perfect adult figure at whom he can laugh. The child, who is ordinarily dominated by the adults in his world, has the advantage.

The newspaper told the story and had headlines saying, BOY AND PET SKUNK TRAP SHAVING LOTION ROBBERS BY SMELL, and the news commentators on the radio told about it too. (p.28)

Humorous discourse is used to create verbal incongruities and accomplishes this in four ways: by distortions, repetitions, or dialect, parody, puns and jokes, or derogatory remarks or

name-calling. The only book in our study based primarily on humorous discourse is Alice. Counting on the child's awareness of the parody, the pun, the play-on-words, and the play-on-meaning, Carroll filled his tale with linguistic play. The child with an understanding of language regularities will find its irregularities humorous.

'That's the reason they're called lessons,' the Gryphon remarked: 'because they lessen from day to day.' (p.128)

Carroll also uses meaningless discourse in Alice, confusing and disconcerting the reader.

'If you knew Time as well as I do,' said the Hatter, 'you wouldn't talk about wasting it. It's him.' 'I don't know what you mean,' said Alice . . . 'I dare say you never even spoke to Time!' (p.96)

It should be understood that none of the three categories I have proposed is exclusive of the others. Authors of children's funny books often utilize all three categories of humor but emphasize only one. So it follows that a book like Freaky Friday, where the humor is based on an extraordinary situation, has characters engaged in odd activities and using peculiar speech. And Alice, a tale woven around language irregularities, has eccentric characters engaging in curious activities.

5. How the Experiment Was Conducted

a. The Ibstock Place School

In order to get acquainted with the British children and have them feel comfortable with me, we began our sessions with joke-telling. I simply asked the children to tell me all of the jokes or funny stories they could think of and their response was pure delight! 'May we tell rude jokes?' they asked. Once we established that anything was permissible, our sessions were spirited. There was no need to worry about a reluctance to speak on the children's part as the only problem was convincing them to speak one at a time. I visited Ibstock Place School three times a week beginning in October of 1980 and remained for approximately two hours each time. Our joke-telling was limited to three complete sessions after which the story-reading sessions began and continued for four weeks, until the middle of November, during which time the children and I established a wonderful rapport. When I came into the classroom in the morning I was greeted with a chorus of, 'Take me today! Take me!' It was very gratifying and convinced me of the natural positive response of children to story-reading.

The parameters of my study are my own. The taped anecdotal records are full of spontaneous chatting by the children who obviously enjoyed what they were doing. Playing the clown to my audience of children, my reading was expressive: dialectal, whiny, noisy, excited, mimicking, or whatever else the text required. As I expected, my reading elicited giggles and comments. A story that is read aloud is only as exciting or as funny as the reader makes it.

This cannot be ignored nor cannot be rejected as 'tainting' the evidence. If the reading was boring or unexciting, no eager faces would have awaited the call to come and hear a story. The taping of the children's reactions, at first, predictably, caused a certain unnatural posturing on the part of the children. However, by the end of the joke-telling sessions, they had forgotten the tape recorder in their eagerness to be the first to tell a joke. By listening to stories and then immediately talking about them, the stories were fresh in the children's minds. Still there was some forgetting and during our discussions it became clear that some humorous descriptions or action or discourse was missed entirely. Still I hoped that enough would be recalled to foster a lively group discussion. Books were selected with regard to the primary type of humor present in each: character, situation, or discourse. The study included 22 children who were divided into two groups of 11 each, one group listening to four books and the other group listening to a different four. (See Chart I in the Appendix.) The children were seen in groups of 3 (one group of 2).

Humorous responses were counted individually, each was recorded for each group of children only once. Identification of funny incidents was verbal and recorded twice: once on tape, and at the same time by the examiner on a chart. The charts in the Appendix explain how character, situation, and discourse were noted and how many individual responses were received in each category (1 = single response, ~~IIII~~ = 5 responses). Charts that appear in the Appendix are:

- I. Books used in Group Studies
- II. Group Responses of British Children
- IIa. Analysis of Group Responses: Ibstock Place School
- III. Group Responses of American Children
- IIIa. Analysis of Group Responses: Chatham Park School
- IV. Total Group Responses of British and American Children
- V. Comparison of Group Responses of British and American Children to British and American Authors
- VI. Group Responses to Fantasy and Realism
- VII. British and American Children's Group Responses to Humorous Discourse

There were certain cultural differences that were expected to influence the responses of the British children. Since British humor is more linguistically oriented than American humor, I expected a greater response to humor in character speech and humor in discourse, especially in Alice where attention to the language is paramount. I expected reaction to humorous metaphors such as: 'That's what's known as a paw bowl,' (Paddington, p. 115), referring to a finger bowl on the dining table, or, 'Tobermory, who is very clever with his paws,' (the Wombles, p.8), to be noted by the British children.

b. The Chatham Park School

The conditions of the American study replicated the British study. The number of children, the group configuration, and the reading of the selections were all duplicated to the best of my ability. Since the children and I were already well-acquainted there were no preliminary joke sessions held before the group reading study began. The children had volunteered to participate in the study and spoke freely and unreservedly during our sessions. I spent four weeks in the United States, in January and February of 1981, conducting the group study. I went to the school five days a

week arriving at nine and leaving at noon. The parameters of the study with the American children and the taped anecdotal records were replicated as they were in the British study. My reading was, to the best of my ability, equivalent to my reading in Great Britain, using the same inflections and expression in both. In our first few sessions, the children were aware of, and pointedly spoke into the tape recorder. However, by our third session there was no more mention of the taping procedure.

The physical setting was more private than the one in which we worked at the Ibstock Place School. We had a private room with no interruptions from other students. The single outstanding problem was getting the teachers and students to remember what time the children were to meet with me. Nothing, including notes to teachers, notes on blackboards, and posted schedules really worked and much time was spent collecting the children from their classrooms. The positive side to this were the chats we had walking together to our room during which time the children and I talked about the stories we were to read that day and I was witness to their obvious anticipation of our session.

The cultural difference that I expected to impact on the American children is the tradition of the slapstick humor as opposed to the linguistic humor of the British writers. American humor is more blatant, more physical, and more explicit and should be expected to have more effect upon the American children.

'Bear overboard!' cried Jonathan, as the boat shot away from the bank.
'Hold on Paddington!' called Judy. 'We're coming.'
'But I did hold on,' cried Paddington, as he came up spluttering for air. 'That's how I fell in.'
(Paddington, p. 17)

6. Group Responses

A. British Children (See Charts II and IIa in the Appendix.)

The book receiving the highest total number of responses was Paddington Helps Out with 17 individual responses. These included 15 referring to character humor and 2 to situational humor. Of the 15 character humor responses, 10 referred to actions and 5 to speech. The children were obviously familiar with Paddington and his bear-like antics and the anthropomorphic frame is a traditional one for children's stories in general. A certain group sharing of the expected recognition of the incongruous resulted.

'Paddington had evening fur.'

When the Browns entered the elegant restaurant for dinner, the head waiter attempted to prevent Paddington's admission because he was not in formal dress. Recognizing the ludicrous idea of a bear in evening dress, many children verbalized that episode as one of the funniest.

'My menu is full of mistakes.'

Because the menu in the dining room was printed in French, Paddington reported that it was incorrect. The children found the concept of Paddington's failure to recognize French as a foreign language very humorous. The other side of that response is that none of the children showed any surprise when confronted with Paddington's ability to read English. Animals have become so humanized through their tradition in children's literature that reading, so long as it is in the children's native language, seems natural for bears. Both of the above responses refer to character speech, the first by Judy Brown and the second by Paddington. There were twice as many responses to humorous actions of characters than there were to humorous speech.

'Paddington threw water on the omelet.'
'Paddington crawled under the table.'
'Paddington ate off the trolley.'

Two more implicit humorous situations were noted indicating a deeper 'beneath the page' reading by the children commenting.

'people never saw a bear in a
restaurant'
'funny to see a bear talk like people'

Obviously those two youngsters were not taken in by Paddington's human-like speech and actions to the exclusion of his explicit bear-like characteristics. The knowledge of the 'rules' of the commonsense world where talking bears do not exist is firmly established and the boundary between the real and the fictive is clear.

The metalinguistic play with language is evident in the recognition of the metaphoric use of animal terms in phrases meant to refer to humans. The children noted 'evening fur' and 'paw bowl' as funny metaphors.

There was an explicit feeling of superiority expressed at Paddington's inability to understand some basic social rules: ordering a marmalade sandwich in an elegant restaurant, relating his 'paw bowl' to his bath earlier in the day, and his eating directly from the trolley. The recognition of the incongruity of Paddington's actions indicates a knowledge of acceptable social behavior by the children.

The book receiving the second highest number of responses was The Wombles, 16 in all, and like Paddington, an anthropomorphic tale. All of the responses to The Wombles are categorized as character humor, 2 referring to character appearance, 8 to character action, and 6 to character speech.

'He came down in the water.'
'He fell down the bank.' (action)
'The umbrella took him up.'

'Are you dead?'
'I'm going to die.' (speech)

The absurd sight of a fat Womble being carried off into the air while clinging to an old umbrella was shared by the groups as the best joke of all. The author counts on this shared awareness of a ludicrous situation and it succeeds. Like Paddington, the children feel superior to Orinoco, the Womble whose calamitous adventure could never happen in their world of reality.

Grimble received 11 responses, all to character humor, 9 to character action, and 2 to character speech, even though it is primarily a book based on humor of situation. In a reversed world where Grimble must see to his own needs while his unconventional parents cannot focus on the concrete, the paradox is noted by the children.

'the mother and father mix up his age'
'the mother kept writing notes'
'the telegram from his parents'

Yet there is no articulation of the reversal as such nor of the fact that Grimble is left alone at age ten for five days. It is, perhaps, too frightening a prospect to articulate. The children's recognition of the incongruity of the situation seemed to be implicit although their selection of humorous events was purely humor of character.

'he knocks everything about'
'he scored 109 goals'
'he takes no notice of things like the
sandwiches in the oven'

The remaining five books were so close in number of responses that they must be looked on as evenly distributed: Alice, a total of 8, 1 referring to character action, 1 to situation, and 6 to discourse; Harriet the Spy, 7, all character (2 action, 5 speech); Freaky Friday, 6, 4 character (2 action, 2 speech), and 2 situation;

Ordinary Jack, 6, 4 character (1 action, 3 speech), and 2 situation; and Homer Price, 5, all situation.

After the reading of the Alice selection the children agreed that they liked the selection but couldn't call it funny. As one child remarked, 'It's an adventure.' The primary technique for creating humor in Alice is through discourse and the children identified many of the puns, plays-on-words, and double meanings.

'taught us/tortoise'
'lessons/lessen'
'funny words for arithmetic'

But only one child noted the incongruity of Alice's situation in general.

'She asks lots of questions and gets
silly answers because she is in a silly
land.'

This child has the boundaries between reality and fantasy firmly set and could see the way in which Carroll manipulated and reset those boundaries. Many of the linguistic plays were missed because their references were beyond the scope of the children (the classics referred to as Laughing and Grief, and History and Geography masked as Mystery and Seaography). Although Carroll's pun on the four branches of arithmetic was recognized, the children did not understand the metaphors and could not name the actual four branches themselves without my help. The use of sound helped the children puzzle out some of the plays-on-words: 'reeling and writhing' for reading and writing. The majority of the children simply referred

to the fact that Carroll 'said all the wrong words' exhibiting an understanding of the metalinguistic play.

All of the children's responses to Harriet the Spy referred to Harriet's note-writing but not to the general situation of the keeping of such a notebook. The most reaction was to the derogatory remarks that Harriet made about her classmates.

'Pinky is like a thin glass of milk'
'Miss Whitehead has feet like skis'
'Miss Whitehead has a hanging stomach'

An interesting side reaction was the lively discussion among the children concerning the feasibility of keeping such a notebook. Several expressed the desire to try it. The boundary between fantasy and reality shifted closer to reality in this case.

The role change in Freaky Friday confused some of the children who had a lengthy discussion centered around Annabel's mother. If Annabel, who was also the narrator, was in her mother's body and still talking and thinking like Annabel, did that mean that her mother, who was in Annabel's body, was still talking and thinking like herself? The question was never resolved since Annabel's mother never takes on the role of the narrator. Certain concepts struck the children as amusing: Annabel's talking to herself, kissing herself goodbye, and going to school to have a conference about herself. Most of the reaction was to the 'rude' bits: referring to her brother as 'ape face,' her teacher as 'McGuirk the jerk,' and her fondness for the phrase 'shut up!' The children's comments ranged from 'I don't understand it' to 'she's really

getting better at being her mother.' The basic incongruous situation of the role change was clear to all of the children, but the shifting boundaries between reality and fantasy were unclear, and the concept of role-changing with a parent seemed implicitly distressing.

The response to Ordinary Jack was interesting. Although actually a book for older children, I was interested in the response to Jack's predicament. Surprisingly, they found Jack sad rather than funny and had very little comment to make about the selection. The discomfort of Jack's situation transferred itself to the children making them unable to share the writer's idea of 'story.' The children actually identified with Jack in two different ways: one group expressed superiority to Jack and his incompetence and the other group empathized with his situation. The single most humor-evoking incident was Uncle Parker's utterance of the word 'Pooh!', a derogatory remark aimed at the youngest Bagthorpe. The general incongruity of the Bagthorpe family's activities was recognized though not considered funny.

The episode of the unstoppable doughnut machine in Homer Price received enthusiastic response. The absurd idea of hundreds of doughnuts pouring out of the machine was the subject of a lengthy discussion.

'Why didn't they pull the plug?'
'Why didn't they take the chain off?'

The children were looking for a realistic solution to a fictional problem. The discourse, which relied on repetition for linguistic

play, delighted the children. By the end of the selection, they were reciting with the reader:

'and the doughnuts kept right on
rolling down the little chute, just as
regular as a clock can tick'

There was no comment on the dialectal speech of the characters, a situation I expected since the American mid-Western dialect is an unfamiliar one to British children.

b. The American Children's Group Responses

(See Charts III and IIIa in Appendix.)

The narrative receiving the most response was Freaky Friday with 12, 11 relating to character humor (8 action, 3 speech), and 1 relating to situation. The primary incongruous situation of the role change was noted. The book is familiar to American children and has been made into a film, making it known to children who have not read the book. There was great attention to the details of Annabel's actions and the humor in her conflicting feelings, both as mother and sister, toward her brother.

'when she was making scrambled eggs and
her brother wanted fried'
'when she didn't want to kiss ape face'
'she got the grotesque thought that he
was waiting for a kiss'

There was a general sense of 'story' and no attempt was made to impose a realistic frame upon the narrative. Rather than feeling confused by Annabel's predicament, the children seemed comfortably amused and remarked:

'It's funny to have the girl and mother
change places'
'It's a strange, and funny story'

Paddington Helps Out, with 11 individual responses, 10 character (6 action, 4 speech) and 1 situation, and The Wombles, with 10 responses, 9 character (2 physical appearance, 3 action, 4 speech) and 1 situation were the next highest in number of responses. The frame of the anthropomorphic tale is, as expected, one which children respond to as part of their literary tradition. One child recognized the incongruity of the actions of the staff in the restaurant juxtaposed with the sight of a bear dining in a restaurant, while another noted the general absurdity of a bear as a human family member.

'a bear eating in a restaurant is funny'
'the waiters were all serious but Paddington
acted liked he was in any old place'

The slapstick antics of Paddington when he encountered new and strange events in the restaurant drew multiple responses.

'when he put water on the omelet'
'when he wanted a marmalade sandwich in a fancy
restaurant'
'the menu has mistakes'
'when the onion ended up in the saxophone'

The most fascinating discussion was the metaphoric use of the phrase 'in marmalade.' Some children recognized its metaphoric use referring to someone in the business of making marmalade, while others took a literal meaning indicating a less developed metalinguistic ability.

'you wouldn't guess that a guy lived in marmalade'
'it's a town called Marmalade'
'he meant he's been eating it'

The responses to The Wombles centered on Orinoco's appearance, actions, and speech.

'when he was flying and making that noise'
'when he said he was dead'
'when he fell in the water'
'he had a mouthful of weeds'

The feelings of superiority raised by Orinoco's escapades were enhanced by Bungo's comical reactions.

'it was funny when Bungo started laughing and
telling him how he looked'
'when one laughed at the other'
'when Orinoco said, 'That's not funny'

The general incongruity of the Wombles and their speech and behavior was not mentioned.

The remaining five books received responses close in number: Homer Price, 9, 7 character humor (3 action, 4 speech), 1 situation, and 1 discourse; Harriet the Spy, 8, all character humor (2 action, 6 speech); Ordinary Jack, 8, 7 character (1 action, 6 speech), and 1 situation; Grimble, 7, all character (5 action, 2 speech); and Alice, 7, 2 character (1 action, 1 speech), 5 discourse.

In Homer Price, the incongruity of the main situational humor of the never-ending doughnut machine was noted. Discourse and speech comments concerned themselves with repetitions, regional dialect, and the spoonerisms of one character.

'the guy yelled, 'I gawt it!'
'the sheriff talked funny, he got his words mixed
up'.

Character action humor was all connected with the discovery of the
lost diamond bracelet in one of the doughnuts.

'the guy who found the bracelet'
'the policeman who kept his eye on Mr. Gaby'

There was no discussion of a solution for stopping the doughnut
machine indicating no confusion of the reality/fantasy boundary.

One group of children agreed that the keeping of the notebook in
Harriet the Spy was humorous, thereby identifying the primary
situational humor. Two others commented on the note-keeping process.

'keeping a notebook like that is funny'
'it's good to make notes about people'

Harriet's derogatory remarks were noted and enjoyed indicating the
fun of laughing at someone else who breaks the 'rules' of everyday
social behavior.

'the way she makes fun of people'
'feet like skis'
'girl was fatter and uglier'

The response to Ordinary Jack was again a sympathetic one. Each
group of children agreed that it was not a funny story although
there were some funny things in it. The largest number of responses
was to character speech that was derogatory in nature.

'Pooh!'
'I beat Jack by ten lengths.'
'Jack swims like an elephant.'

There was a dichotomy between sympathetic feelings for Jack and a sense of superiority at his incompetence. There was no sense of the incongruous involving the overall situational humor of an ordinary boy in an eccentric family.

The response to Grimble was to character humor centering on action and speech. There was a certain uneasiness exhibited toward Grimble's situation as a child on his own for five days.

'his parents went to Peru'
'it's not funny'
'he found notes all over the house'

The children's unconscious uneasiness with Grimble's situation and their failure to see the incongruous humor in the adult/child role change indicates their inability to perceive where the author has set the boundary between reality and fantasy.

As expected, the largest number of responses to Alice was in the area of humorous discourse. Many of the language puns and the plays-on-words were recognized and understood including the four branches of arithmetic indicating the development of a metalinguistic awareness.

'called the tortoise because he taught
us'
'called lessons because they lessen'

The most interesting comment came from one child who recognized the adult/child relationship between Alice and the Gryphon. As the group discussed the linguistic play, he interjected:

'The Gryphon changed the subject because he couldn't answer Alice's questions.'

There was no comment on the incongruity of Alice's situation or any reference to the dream setting. There was general agreement that the story frame was not a humorous one. The discussion centered on the discourse alone.

C. Comparison of Group Responses

(See Charts IV and V in Appendix.)

The two highest single number of responses (28, 26) received were by two anthropomorphic stories depending primarily on character humor (Paddington Bear and The Wombles). The two second highest number of responses recorded were by stories dependent upon a central situational theme, but those responses were almost entirely elicited by humor of character (Grimble, Freaky Friday). In one, (Freaky Friday), the primary situational humor was identified (role change), but in the other (Grimble), it was not (boy left to care for himself while parents travelled). The remaining books (Ordinary Jack, Harriet the Spy, Homer Price, and Alice) all received almost the same number of comments. The crucial point in three of these stories (all but Alice) is that commenting on funny happenings was almost exclusively on character humor. Alice, where the humor is

primarily based on discourse, received most of its comments (11 of 15) on that linguistic humor. In tabulating the children's comments solely on character humor (120 total), 5 related to physical appearance, 62 related to character actions, and 53 related to character speech. In the books based chiefly on humor of situation (Harriet the Spy, Grimble, Freaky Friday, and Homer Price), the children identified the main humor strand in three of them (all but Grimble). The total number of responses for books based on situational humor was 65. They were divided in the following manner: 55 for character humor, 9 for situational humor, and 1 for humor of discourse. It seems clear that funny characters and their actions and speech account for an overwhelming number of responses even in books primarily based on a funny situation. Only in Alice, the only book relying on linguistic humor, did character not dominate the children's comments.

Looking at the kinds of linguistic play identified (see Chart XIV in the Appendix), 9 noted distortions repetitions, or dialect, 50 noted puns and jokes, and 25 noted derogatory remarks or name-calling. Puns and jokes yielded twice the number of responses of the next highest type of linguistic play, derogatory remarks or name-calling.

The widest differences of response to books by authors of the other culture, appeared in two books: Freaky Friday, by an American author, and Grimble, by a British author. The American children, after identifying the primary situational humor in Freaky Friday, went on to quickly recall all of Annabel's derogatory remarks and

name-calling. To the contrary, the British children recalled only one such remark and some additional humorous actions. Freaky Friday is a very 'American' style book with the main character speaking in 'lingo' that the children are used to hearing and find funny.

'I never have any appetite for all that vomitizing stuff you pile into me.'

On the other hand, Grimble is much more an English funny book. There are no derogatory remarks and name-calling to recall and the humor lies in Grimble's calm acceptance of his situation and the comic actions in which he indulges. But it is the linguistic contrast between the two books that points up the way the two cultures use what is purported to be the same language.

My father is William Waring Andrews; he's called Bill; he's thirty-eight; he has brown hair which is a little too short, but I've seen worse, and blue eyes; he's six feet (well, five eleven and a half); and he's a fantastically cool person. He's an account executive at Joffert and Jennings, and last year his main account was Fosphree. If you're into the environment thing at all, you know what that is:

(Freaky Friday)

Grimble's father was something to do with going away, and his mother was a housewife by profession who liked to be with her husband whenever possible. Grimble went to school.

It is common to find American children's books relying on the vernacular to appeal to the reader while British children's books appear to keep a distance between the author and the narrator and depend less on how children speak and more on what they say and do.

'What is French for a dog?' said Monsieur Boudin. Grimble absolutely hated saying I don't know, so he said, 'Un whoof.' Monsieur was a bit deaf so he said, 'Again,' and Grimble thinking he had almost got it right said, 'Un whoof whoof.'

One other book by an American writer did not evoke the same type of responses from the British children as it did the Americans. Homer Price is the story of a typical mid-Western American family so common to American fiction. The use of the dialectal mid-Western twang is one of American writers' comic techniques that is unfamiliar to British children. The comic characters, exaggerated mid-Western small town folk, have been a part of American lore and so both familiar and laughable to American children.

"Well, I'll be dunked!" said Uncle Ulysses.
"Derned ef you won't be when Aggie gits home,"
said the sheriff.

This dialectal humor noted by the American children was not commented on at all by the British children since this is an unfamiliar convention.

The two anthropomorphic stories (Paddington Bear and The Wombles) both received substantially more commentary by the British children. In all fairness, Paddington, although popular in America, never achieved the heights that it did in Great Britain and therefore is not as widely read. The Wombles is virtually unknown by American children and is very familiar to British children, especially since it has been made into a television series. Although both groups of children had similar types of comments, the

British children remembered more comic action and language than the American children did. In a total of 17 responses to *Paddington* by the British children, 10 were character actions, 5 were character language, and 2 were situational, while the American group, with a total of 11 responses, gave 6 to character action, 4 to character language, and 1 to situational humor. Responding to *The Wombles*, British children had a total of 16 comments, all character humor: 2 physical appearance, 8 action, and 6 language. The American children made 10 responses: 9 character, including 2 physical appearance, 3 action, and 4 language, and one situational response.

There was little doubt that the British children listened to the stories more carefully and paid more attention to the language itself than the American children did. The writer's phrasing was recalled while the Americans were more likely to recall concepts.

'When Bungo said, 'Are you dead?'
as opposed to
'when he said he was dead.'

Although both groups gave a comparatively high number of responses to both of these books, it is interesting to note the differences in the number and quality of those responses.

Of the remaining books, comparative responses of both groups were close in number and revealed no appreciable differences in kinds of humor noted.

There was no appreciable difference between the number of responses of British and American children toward humor in fantasy vs. humor in realistic stories: the British children recorded 46

separate responses to fantasy books while the American children recorded 40, with 29 and 32 responses, respectively, for realistic stories. (See Chart VI in Appendix.)

It would seem that children of a comparable age in both countries find the same things funny. The humor comes more from what is popular with each age group rather than with the individual culture. This supposition would be compatible with the Opies' work in England and the Knapps' work in America which noted that much of the lore of schoolchildren is peculiar to both countries. Sandra McCosh, in her collection of children's jokes, found that a large proportion of the jokes were found in both cultures; some were delayed in transmission and some used different characters (the Polish joke in America is the Irish joke in England), but the types of humor were similar.

C. The Individual Study

1. The Situation

a. The British Children's Individual Setting

This part of the study was conducted at the same school with the same children but only 8 of the 22 were involved in the individual study. Children who participated in this portion of the study were all reading competently at least at the third grade level in order to read the selections without experiencing frustration. There was no recorded formal reading level for the children so I had to rely on teacher judgment in the selection of the children for the study. His judgment seemed correct since none of the children showed any difficulty with the selections. This part of the study was carried

out to collect individual responses as opposed to group responses. Therefore, the children were asked to indicate their responses to the books by writing them on a sheet of paper. There was an obvious reluctance on the part of the children to write their responses as opposed to discussing them as we did in the group study. The children were concerned about the form of their writing, spelling, punctuation, and whether they were to be graded for the paper. When I made it clear that my interest was only in their thoughts on the humor, they visibly relaxed. One boy continued to resist writing but was content to dictate his reactions to me and wanted very much to take part in the study so was permitted to do so. One of the books in the study had recently been read to the children in class (The Shrinking of Treehorn) and consequently was familiar to them. However, since they had no chance to confer about the portion to be read, I feel that their reactions to the story were individual.

The physical setting was exactly the same as it was in the group study with the exception that desks were used to insure the most comfortable setting for writing. No conversation was permitted between the children and I had no conversational exchange with the children prior to the reading.

b. The American Children's Individual Setting

This part of the study was conducted at the same school with the same children, but, as in the British study, only 8 of the 22 children took part. In this case, formal reading levels were available and used to insure that the children could comfortably read the selections. The children were chosen from the group who

qualified on a volunteer basis. Since more qualified than could participate in the study, there were more than enough volunteers. This particular group of children were not as concerned about their writing skills possibly because they were well acquainted with the examiner and felt under less pressure to perform academically.

This study, like the group study, is the first of its kind and not a representative sample. Still, I believe that collecting anecdotal comments of children, whether verbal or written, will yield valuable information about humor in children's books.

2. The Books (See Chart VIII in the Appendix.)

The books were selected, as they were in the group study, with regard to the primary type of humor employed in each: character, situation, or discourse. Each group of eight children was divided into two groups, group A and group B. The books read by each group were:

<u>Group A</u>	<u>Group B</u>
<u>Tales of a Fourth Grade Nothing</u> (p. 19-26)	<u>The Shrinking of Treehorn</u> (p. 25-39)
<u>Ramona the Pest</u> (p. 13-17)	<u>Clever Polly and the Stupid Wolf</u> (p. 8-10)
<u>Follow That Bus!</u> (p. 9-15)	<u>Mr. Popper's Penguins</u> (p. 20-24)
<u>Pippi Longstocking</u> (p. 19-22)	<u>Professor Branestawm</u> (p. 39-44)

At the conclusion of the individual readings, each child was interviewed singly by the examiner to discuss reactions to each selection read. These interviews were also taped and allowed the examiner to probe more deeply into the children's responses to the humorous conventions employed by the authors.

As opposed to the 'shared awareness' of the group study, the children would have to share the writer's concept of what is funny on their own. The reasons for the selection of the books have been explained fully in the section describing the books in the group study. There was every effort made to apply the same criteria to books for both parts of the study in order to create as few uncontrolled variables as possible. My proposals concerning character, situation, and discourse as the primary categories of humor in children's books is reflected in my choice of books for the individual study as well as the group.

Five of my selections employ character as the primary source of humor: Tales of a Fourth Grade Nothing, Clever Polly and the Stupid Wolf, The Incredible Adventures of Professor Branestawm, Ramona the Pest, and Pippi Longstocking. The remaining three selections have a humorous situation as the primary source of the comic: Follow that Bus!, Mr. Popper's Penguins, and The Shrinking of Treehorn. There is no book in the individual study primarily based on humorous discourse. As in the group study, I have included books by both British and American writers. I have also continued to look at the anthropomorphic tradition, and included two books that fit that category (Clever Polly and Mr. Popper's Penguins). The penguins in Mr. Popper's story are decidedly different from Paddington and the Wombles since they embody no human characteristics and bring their animal traits into a human world. I will be interested in whether or not the children make any mention of these differences in anthropomorphic tales. The wolf in Clever Polly is similar to

Paddington in that he speaks and acts like a human yet retains his animal tendencies. Each chapter is the continuing saga of Polly's escape from the wolf, who well deserves his title of 'stupid,' as Polly's clever machinations outwit him every time. The penguins do not speak except in penguin talk (Gork!) and revel in the Popper household where the cellar is flooded to create a swimming pool and the fridge becomes their home. Clever Polly is a wonderful modern-day parody of 'Little Red Riding Hood' with a role reversal for the wolf. Instead of the expected frightening figure, we meet a wolf who says the right wolf-like things but is easily bested by Polly's ingenuity.

'Now this time you shan't escape me!' he snarled.
'Get ready to be eaten up now!'
'Just smell around first,' said Polly gently.
'Marvelous!' admitted the wolf. 'What is it?'

Tales of a Fourth Grade Nothing is a realistic story of a nine year old with a terrible problem -- his little brother. Feeling neglected and overlooked by his parents, he mirrors the feelings of all children who feel displaced by younger siblings. Each chapter is a separate episode and close to reality, yet exaggerated enough to make the events laughable, inviting the reader to see the universality of his everyday problems.

'My biggest problem is my brother
Fudge is always in my way. He messes up
everything he sees

The realistic frame and the child's unconscious feelings of anger toward siblings are what the author counts on sharing with the child.

Professor Branestawm, the archetype of the absent-minded professor, embodies sheer madness that lands him in continual trouble. The reader can enjoy a feeling of superiority over the professor's continual confusion.

'Two penny stamps please,' then he remembered he wasn't in the post office 'Er -- that is I mean a cup of tea and a bun,'

His absurd physical appearance, exaggerated actions, and vague disjointed speech combine to create a true literary clown.

Ramona the Pest, a raucous tomboy character, is the fictional counterpart of every child's bothersome little sister. Her long-awaited first day of school is a continuation of all of her other days: hectic, enthusiastic, and filled with events that only Ramona could precipitate. Her interest in things is so keen and she asks so many frank questions that the results are often calamitous. The humor of her character is explicit, centering on her impulsive actions and speech. This book, like Tales of a Fourth Grade Nothing, is another example of an exaggerated realistic frame that counts on the absurdity of the commonplace to create humor.

'Miss Binney, I want to know -- how did Mike Mulligan go to the bathroom when he was digging the basement of the town hall?'

The last of the books based on character humor in our individual study is Pippi Longstocking, the only book in the study not by a British or American author. Written by the Swedish author, Astrid Lindgren, it is a favorite of both British and American children.

Pippi lives the life many children dream of: she lives alone, doesn't go to school, and in fact, does exactly as she pleases. Everything she does is magnified and the story is filled with her absurd words and actions designed to draw the reader into her topsy-turvy world.

'Why do you have a horse on the porch?' asked Tommy
'Well,' said Pippi thoughtfully, 'he'd be in the way in the kitchen, and he doesn't like the parlor.'

Our three remaining books all involve humor based on an incongruous situation. In Mr. Popper's Penguins, Captain Cook, a live penguin comes to live in the Popper household. The humor lies in the family's calm acceptance of what are actually unusual and nonsensical events.

'He certainly is sweet,' she said.
'I'll have to forgive him for biting my ankle.
He probably only did it out of curiosity.'

The juxtaposition of the penguin world and the human world creates a series of incongruous events in which the penguin reigns supreme and commonsense becomes nonsense.

The Shrinking of Treehorn is the story of a boy who gets progressively smaller while the adults in his world refuse to acknowledge his problem.

'If you want to pretend you're shrinking, that's all right,' says his mother, 'as long as you don't do it at the table.'

The conventional responses of the adults combined with Treehorn's increasing difficulty in maneuvering in his everyday world cause comical mishaps. Into one humorous situation the writer has put the sensible child and the incompetent adult, counting on engendering a sense of superiority in the reader. This realistic frame, in which the child is superior to the adult, has become part of the children's literary tradition.

The humorous situation in Follow that Bus! involves a busload of schoolchildren on a class trip who get caught up with escaping bank robbers. Again the adults are outwitted by clever children and the villains are caught. This is different from our other selections in that the humorous situation is more realistic than the others. A shrinking boy and penguins in the house are fantasy situations but an escapade with bank robbers could really happen. The author is counting on a sense of the humor of the situation, not a sense of its absurdity.

3. How the Experiment Was Conducted

a. The Ibstock Place School

Eight children, selected by the teacher, were asked to silently read selections chosen by the examiner from the books discussed in the previous section. The children were divided into two groups, one group reading four books, and one group the other four. After reading each selection, they were asked to record their responses on a sheet of paper at the top of which the examiner had written: 'Write the things that you thought were funny in the story.' I read the sentence to each child to be sure he understood what he was to

do. The children were permitted to look back at the book if they wished. There were two children reading selections from two different books with me at a time. I continued the three day a week visits to the school and spent two hours each day at the school. This part of the study began in the middle of November, 1980 and continued until 12 December, 1980. After each child finished the four designated selections, I interviewed each alone and taped his reactions to the books in general. Which book was the favorite? Did the child like reality or fantasy best? Which book would he read in its entirety? Recognizing the restrictions of the written response, I wanted to use additional means to discover what the children found humorous.

As in the group study, the parameters of the individual study are my own. Both the written and taped responses are informal yet allow insights different from the group sessions. No longer under peer pressure to conform, they were able to give their own opinions. Those children who dominated group discussions were ineffective, and those who were dominated could speak freely. Since the interviews came at the end of the study, the children were familiar enough with the examiner to speak frankly. I also hoped to discover how much children were influenced by expressive oral reading of stories as opposed to their own silent reading and how much the group setting itself influenced what the children thought was funny.

b. The Chatham Park School

As in the group study, the conditions of the individual American study were held as closely as possible to those in the British school. Eight children were selected by their teachers and divided into two groups, each child reading the same four selections as his counterpart in the British school. Both the written response and the personal interview replicated the British study. The study was conducted over a period of two weeks, the last week in January and the first week in February, 1981, five days of each week spent at the school.

Both groups of children responded so well to this part of the study that my main difficulty was in getting them to stop reading when they reached the designated end of each selection.

The scoring for the individual responses was identical to the scoring for the group responses. Each character, situation, or linguistic element was counted once for each child. (1 = single response, ~~III~~ = 5 responses). Only the written responses were counted for the tabulation of scores. Charts that appear in the Appendix are:

VIII Books in the Individual Study

- IX Individual Responses of British Children
- IXa Analysis of Individual Responses: Ibstock Place School
- X Individual Responses of American Children
- Xa Analysis of Individual Responses: Chatham Park School
- XI Total Individual Responses of British and American Children

- XII Comparison of Individual Responses of British and American Children to British and American Authors
- XIII Individual Responses to Fantasy and Realism
- XIV British and American Children's Individual Responses to Humorous Discourse

4. The Responses

a. The British Children (See Charts IX and IXa)

As might be expected, those children who talked the most, wrote the most. Some children simply retold the selection, others selected one or two items as funny, and still others wrote a succinct 'I don't think it was funny.' (See Appendix for a representative sample of the children's work.) Although there was a substantial difference between books judged as funniest and least funny, those selections that received the most number of responses were separated by only one response each.

Professor Branestawm, character humor, received the highest number of responses, 9, all character humor (6 action, 3 speech). These comments were all connected with the professor's absent-minded behavior:

'he had to go to all the libraries'
'he asked for stamps in the library'
'the papers fell out of his hat'

The expected responses were given and the children noted the major humorous parts of the selection.

The selection receiving the next highest number of responses was Pippi Longstocking, focusing on character humor, with 8 responses, all character (1 appearance, 3 action, 4 speech). The major portion of the responses referred to the episode in which Pippi makes pancakes, a wild, slapstick comic scene.

'when she started throwing eggs'
'the pancake batter splashed on the walls'
'when Pippi said egg yolk was good for the hair'

As with Professor Branestawm, the children responded to the clown-like antics of Pippi and the incongruities of the events in her world, firmly removed from the commonplace.

The two books receiving the third highest number of responses were Tales of a Fourth Grade Nothing and Mr. Popper's Penguins. The Tales, a realistic story relying on character humor, received 7 responses, all character (4 action, 3 speech). Five of the 7 comments concerned the speech and actions of Fudge, the two year old.

'No eat'
'Fudge ate his meals under the table'
'Fudge tried to do a handstand'

The event that everyone noted was an irate father pouring cereal on Fudge's head. This was the culmination of a series of exasperating days with Fudge and caused all of the children to delight in Fudge's getting his just rewards.

Mr. Popper's Penguins, a realistic story built on an incongruous idea, also received all 7 responses to character humor (5 action, 2 speech). Responses indicated that there was an implicit understanding of the humor in a penguin living in a human household.

'when the penguin ate the goldfish'
'Captain Cook pecked at the chairs'
'Captain Cook looked guilty'

All seven responses concerned the incongruity of a penguin in a human family.

Clever Polly and the Stupid Wolf received 5 responses, all commenting on character humor (2 action, 3 speech). All of the remarks concerned the speech and actions of the wolf.

'the wolf kept coming back'
'the wolf tasted the hot toffee'
'the wolf said, 'I'm going to eat you''

None of the children noted the fact that the tale is a parody of 'Little Red Riding Hood.'

Follow That Bus!, a story based on an incongruous situation, received 3 responses, 2 character (1 action, 1 speech) and 1 situation. The primary humorous situation was not identified.

'Miss Beaver went in the wrong door of the bus'
'the cars bumped'
'Our teacher has been kidnapped'

Both The Shrinking of Treehorn and Ramona the Pest received 2 responses each. In Treehorn, both comments were about the speech of characters.

'Nursery school is at the end of the hall'
'he confused shrinking and shirking'

The comments about Ramona were also all character humor (1 action, 1 speech).

'Ramona thought she was getting a
present'
'Ramona wouldn't budge'

The dual meaning of present (here and a gift), which created confusion for Ramona, was noted by three of the four children who read the selection.

The Personal Interviews

As previously stated, the interviews were held in order to ascertain whether, in a quiet personal meeting with the examiner, the children would have anything more to add to the written responses they had already made. We were at a certain disadvantage since the interviews were held after all four selections had been read and some details forgotten, yet some interesting preferences emerged. Six of the eight children preferred fantasy to realistic stories.

'Made up books are funnier than true
ones'
'Tall tales are funny'

All of the eight children stated a preference for books about funny characters and recalled incidents supporting that preference.

'Professor Branestawm stepped in a pail
of water'
'It's funny that Polly is smarter than
the wolf'
'A penguin in the fridge is funny'
'The wolf was funny when he burned his
mouth'

One of the children in the study remarked that Ramona wasn't funny because he had a pesty little sister like that. Another observed that Fudge (in Tales) wasn't funny because he had a brother like that. There was no clearly defined favorite among the books and no additional insights into the children's references.

2. The American Children (See Charts X and Xa)

The book receiving the most responses was Tales of a Fourth Grade Nothing with 10 comments, 9 character (6 action, 3 speech), and 1 discourse. Responses were not limited to Fudge (the little brother) but divided among Fudge, Peter, and their parents.

'Fudge threw food on the floor'
'Peter juggled an orange'
'Mother stuffed potatoes into Fudge's
mouth.'

The next highest number of responses went to The Shrinking of Treehorn with 9, 8 character (2 action, 6 speech), and 1 situation. Six of the responses related to the mechanical and conventional behavior and speech of adults.

'Nursery school is at the end of the
hall'
'The principal kept talking about the
team'
'Everybody ignored his situation'

Although there was no specific mention of Treehorn's shrinking as humorous, there was implicit awareness based on the responses which were all related to Treehorn's physical problem. The responses to Treehorn, as well as to the two previously discussed books, were all expected.

The remaining selections were all within one tally of each other. Professor Branestawm received 7, 5 character (all action) and 2 discourse. All of the character action comments concerned the professor.

'he kept forgetting'
'he kept losing the books'
'he couldn't make up his mind where he
was'

These conventional responses were accompanied by two that were unexpected: one child saw the humor in 'feeding the bookworms' and two children noted the title of the book the professor was reading, The Life and Likings of a Lobster.

Clever Polly and the Stupid Wolf received 6 responses, all character (4 action, 2 speech). Four of the six referred specifically to the wolf and two to Polly's cleverness, all expected responses.

'the wolf ate the toffee'
'I'm going to eat you up!'
'Polly kept feeding him'
'Polly outsmarted the wolf'

The comprehension of the role reversal of the wolf was implicit in the kind of responses given. There was no mention of the selection as a parody of 'Little Red Riding Hood.'

Follow That Bus! had 6 responses, 5 character (all action) and 1 situation. The primary comic situation was not identified.

'robbers waved their guns in the air'
'the cars crashed'
'the girl fell flat'

There was no mention of the absent-minded behavior of the teacher. Like the British children, this was judged at the lowest end of the scale.

Ramona the Pest received 5 responses, all character (1 appearance 1 action, 3 speech). The confusion of the dual meanings of present was identified by all of the children, and three noted Ramona's attraction to Susan's curly hair.

'hair like springs'
'boing, went her curls'
'Susan's long hair'

The responses to Pippi Longstocking, 5, were all related to humor of character (4 action, 1 speech), all of the action connected with her chaotic preparation of pancake batter.

'when she threw the eggs'
'the eggs landed on her head'
'when the pancake mix went on the walls'

There was no mention of Pippi's solitary living arrangement nor her failure to attend school.

Mr. Popper's Penguins received 4 responses, all character, and all involving humorous actions. While the children did not specifically note the situational humor at the center of the story, it was implicit in their responses.

'Captain Cook ate goldfish'
'Captain Cook hid in the refrigerator'
'Captain Cook bit Mrs. Popper's ankle'

The Personal Interviews

Seven of the eight children in the study indicated a preference for fantasy over realistic stories. Except for Tales of a Fourth Grade Nothing, the realistic story that received the highest number of responses, there is correlation with the favorites in the written section, The Shrinking of Treehorn and Professor Branestawm. Other comments indicated a strong preference for funny characters.

'I like funny animals'
'Pippi is really funny'
'The shrinking boy is funny'

None of the interviews yielded any new information about the selections read silently.

c. Comparison of the Results of the British and American

Individual Studies (See Chart XII.)

Examining the total responses of the British and American children, the highest single responses (17 and 16 respectively) were recorded for Tales of a Fourth Grade Nothing and Professor Branestawm. Both are primarily character humor and feature

clown-like characters whose actions are absurdly incongruous. Following were Pippi Longstocking with 13, and Clever Polly and the Stupid Wolf, Mr. Popper's Penguins, and The Shrinking of Treehorn, all with 11. The lowest number was recorded by Ramona the Pest with 7. Total number of responses equaled 95. Of the total number, 89 referred to either physical appearance, actions or speech of character. Only 3 responses referred specifically to situation and 3 to general language humor. Of the character humor responses, 2 referred to physical appearance, 50 referred to character action, and 37 referred to character speech. Of the three books on situational humor, Follow That Bus!, Mr. Popper's Penguins, and The Shrinking of Treehorn, the children identified the primary humorous situation in only two: Mr. Popper and Treehorn. This is not surprising since the latter two situations were explicitly identified in the titles as well as early in the narrative. In Treehorn we read on the initial page:

Something very strange was happening to
Treehorn.

In Follow That Bus!, the main humor of situation is the unlikely involvement of a group of school children with bank robbers. Although the reader is aware that a bus trip takes place, it is not until the second chapter that the bank robbers and the children come together. The humorous situation is too long in being identified for the children to isolate it promptly.

The responses of the children who read the selections on their own were very similar to the group reactions. Character humor

overwhelmingly accounted for the major portion of the reactions most often identifying character actions or character speech. General humorous language had little response. This is primarily due to the fact that there was little general language humor, although much humor of character speech. Comparing the humorous language chart for individual responses with the chart for group responses (VII and XIV), indicates the broad differences. It is important to note that the largest number of responses, puns and jokes, occurred after the reading of Alice, a book primarily based on linguistic humor.

Comparing the British children's responses to the American children yields only one appreciable difference: Treehorn received 2 from the British children while the American children gave it 9. The only probable cause for this disparity is the fact that all of the British children knew the story well and perhaps the familiarity with the incongruous shrinking of a small boy can no longer elicit a humorous response once it is familiar to the reader.

Comparing the reactions to fantasy versus realistic humorous stories points up a much wider disparity between the group responses (Chart VI) and the individual written responses (see Chart XIII). The figures in the written responses are close in number, although the Ibstock School children made a total of 5 more comments to the fantasy stories than they did to the realistic stories. Comparing the group reactions, however, indicates a stronger reaction to the fantasy tales, more marked for the British children. Although apparently an indication of a preference for fantasy humor, it is important to point out that the four fantasy narratives are more

heavily laden with incongruous characters, situation, and discourse and therefore produce more reaction. The realistic stories depended more upon children in exaggerated situations rather than comic characters who dominate the fantasy tales. As I have already noted, character humor was the overwhelming favorite of all of the children both in the group and individual settings.

Fantasy humor also makes it possible to see the boundaries between the real and the imaginary more clearly: Polly interacts with a rather stupid talking wolf, Treehorn shrinks, Pippi lives alone, doesn't attend school, and has no visible adult supervision, Professor Branestawm's waste paper rises up on legs and comes running out of doors. On the other hand, realistic humor relies on the creation of the child's commonsense world in fiction and counts on the writer's ability to make the child find something funny in that world. The writer accomplishes this by playing with the boundaries of that commonsense world and resetting them in a manner that both surprises and amuses the reader. Ramona the Pest is a familiar figure to young readers but when her actions cross the bounds between the ordinary and the absurd she becomes ludicrous. Sometimes the narrative is painful as well as comical as both Ramona and Tales of a Fourth Grade Nothing are. The familiar trials and mishaps move from sad to funny when the reader is able to see that they are commonly experienced problems that are general and not specific to individual children. When this is understood, the aggressive feelings produced by such problems are acceptable and even comical. Not to be overlooked is the fact that these painful

occurrences are effecting fictional characters and not the reader and so can more easily be regarded as humorous.

D. Group versus Individual Reactions

There are two basic uncontrolled variables that influenced the responses of the children in both studies. In the first, the group setting itself had a strong impact upon the individual children in the group. First, the recall of humorous incidents by one child naturally triggered the memory of the others in the group. Second, often one child dominated the discussion putting words in the mouths of the others. Third, the group social setting pressured the individual members to respond affirmatively since, if one child found humor in the story, the others were anxious to concur. It was almost impossible to tell if it was the story that elicited the reactions or the group setting itself. This would correspond with the work done by Chapman et al (see psychological chapter) who concluded that it was not the humorous content that was responsible for the group reactions but the social setting of the group itself. In addition, the reading of the stories aloud by the examiner also influenced the reactions of some of the children. The puns and jokes, dialect and humorous speech were naturally read with expression and were responsible for the children remembering some of the funny incidents. Several remarked, "I like the way you said, 'Are you dead?' (The Wombles). On reflection, however, the examiner's reading was much less of an influence than the individual group members themselves.

The dominant factor in the individual reading of selections was

the writing of the responses as opposed to the oral discussion that took place after the reading of the selections to the group. I was aware of the reluctance of some children to write, but felt it necessary to obtain a purely individual reaction. Even in a discussion with the examiner and one child, the examiner was in danger of transmitting her reactions to the child's comments through facial expression even though every effort was made not to influence the child in any way. But in order to probe the child's reactions more deeply, after the written response was completed, I interviewed each child individually and encouraged him to speak freely about the selections he had read. The comments were amazingly candid.

'Treehorn isn't funny. It's the idea
of his shrinking that is funny...'
'Peter liked to see Fudge in trouble.
Kids are like that.'
'Made up books are funnier than true
ones.'

E. Conclusions:

What, then, do children find funny in their books? The single dominant characteristic is the humorous character. Out of eight books read to 44 children, 148 responses were given. Of the 148, 117 referred to some character trait, speech, or action. Of the remaining 31 responses, 17 were situational and 14 were general discourse. Character humor in general is more explicit than situational or broad language humor. Characters look, act, or speak with some measure of incongruity. Grumble kicks goals with a coconut, Harriet gives graphic descriptions of her friends and neighbors, and the sheriff in Homer Price speaks in comical spoonerisms.

The tradition of the anthropomorphic tale elicits a high number of responses. These stories have historically been a part of children's lore and obviously still produce pleasure. Children like animal stories because they allow them to laugh at the animal's antics and feel superior to them while at the same time noting their human qualities. Paddington learns how to put the stopper in the bathtub and fill it, but he doesn't understand that he must turn the water off to make it stop filling when the water reaches the top. At the same time the animals have a freedom attributed to adults. They travel freely on their own, eat what and when they please, and speak their minds openly. It is this child/adult combination that makes them irresistible to children. Their antics are wonderfully funny because they are creatures of fantasy and not to be taken seriously. Paddington crawls under the table at the restaurant breaking all of the 'rules' of dining etiquette but it is all right because he's only a bear and everyone knows bears have no manners. The child, who might love to behave in such an unacceptable way, knows the 'rules' and won't do so, but he can indulge himself in laughter at Paddington.

All of the other books revolve around characters in some type of extraordinary situation fraught with incongruity: Alice falls down a rabbit hole and finds herself in a wonderland, Ordinary Jack is juxtaposed with an extraordinary, eccentric family, Harriet keeps a notebook and finds herself in deep trouble because of it, Grimble is left alone for five days while his parents go off to Peru, in Freaky

Friday a mother and daughter exchange bodies, and Homer Price finds himself with a runaway doughnut machine.

Whether in a story of realism or fantasy, the child can be lured into the fictive world once he has come to terms with the rules of the commonplace. Each child can identify with the one in the story, his successes, his failures, and above all, his mishaps. Once he has established the boundaries between commonsense and nonsense, he is free to play with those boundaries. Some narratives, however, the children found too threatening to be funny. Although they enjoyed listening to Alice and were almost all familiar with it, none thought it funny. It was, for them, an adventure, with danger and madness, and rather difficult to understand.

'I like the sound of the wrong words
but I don't know what they mean.'
'I liked it but it's not funny.'
'It's an adventure.'

The problem with Alice is that what started as a story for children when Lewis Carroll told it turned into an adult piece when he wrote it. When the little girl, Alice, falls down a well into a strange country where everything happens with a fascinating illogicality, the children can enjoy her adventures as a giant and a pygmy and her encounters with the White Rabbit and the Cheshire Cat. But when the linguistic play relies on meanings and concepts that they cannot comprehend, Carroll has stepped over into the world of adults, where references to the mad world and linguistic concepts are understood.

'But I don't want to go among mad people,' Alice remarked.
'Oh, you can't help that,' said the Cat: 'we're all made here. I'm mad. You're mad.'
(p. 88)

'..... there's a large mustard-mine near here. And the moral of that is -- "the more there is of mine, the less there is of yours."
'Oh, I know!' exclaimed Alice, who had not attended to this last remark,
(p. 120)

Why do children fail to appreciate some humor that appeals to adults? Basically it is because the child has not yet learned to read 'beneath the page' and takes the author at his literal word. The children are invited to share with the writer the values that are set out. By failing to do so simply indicates that they are as yet unable to accomplish a 'deeper reading' and accept what the writer says at face value. In Alice, the deeper reading involves sharing Carroll's 19th century values, a task not possible for 20th century children. Carroll's ridicule of the moral and didactic tales, his philosophical views that 'we're all mad here,' and his psychological interpretations are 'frames' not familiar to the young child. But his wonderful and unique characters and spontaneous play with language are shared and appreciated by children of all ages.

The same was true of Ordinary Jack. Nothing seemed funny about a boy who is in constant competition with more talented and able siblings. Some children actually refused to relate to it. Shifting those boundaries became too painful to endure.

'That's a book for grownups. It's a
bit difficult to understand.'
'It's not funny. It's rather boring.'

In all fairness to Helen Cresswell, this book is intended for older children than the ones in the study, but it must be noted that the examiner read the excerpt to the children and preceded it with an introduction to the story laying the groundwork for its comprehension.

Situational humor is more difficult to appreciate than character humor and requires an early insight into what is about to happen. On page one of Freaky Friday we learn:

'When I woke up this morning, I found
I'd turned into my mother.'

The incongruous situation is identified as soon as the child begins to read drawing him immediately into the tale. The deeper more implicit humor of situation that appeals to the adult escapes the child. Again, he is unable to see beyond the words of the author to generalize the situation. When the situation is not explicitly identified as it is in Freaky Friday and Grimble, the children have difficulty isolating it. Although they found Harriet's notebook jottings funny (Harriet the Spy), they failed to see the humor in her engaging in such an activity itself. While the author invites the reader to judge for himself whether it is the characters in Harriet's notes that are humorous or Harriet herself, the young reader is unable to see 'beneath the page' to make that judgment.

Language humor (see Charts VII and XIV) in its most explicit form does not escape young readers. Puns and jokes, dialect, distortion, and repetition, and derogatory remarks and name-calling all elicit immediate response. What does elude the young child is the adult concepts that require knowing conventional adult 'rules.' For example, Aunt Celia, in Ordinary Jack, can 'solve the Times' crossword in ten minutes flat without a dictionary...' Adults in England know that a feat such as Celia's is thought to indicate outstanding intelligence. That, coupled with Celia's vague, whimsical behavior creates a comical character beyond the recognition of the young child. The wealthy woman in Homer Price who takes off her jewels, puts on an apron, and proceeds to whip up a batch of doughnut batter while her chauffeur stands in attendance requires real understanding of the class system to see the humor of it. These are examples of the difficulty found in the sharing of values between reader and writer when the reader has not internalized the 'sense' of the event. There can be no nonsense without the commonsense having been learned. The major use of language play occurred in Alice and identification of Carroll's incongruities depended on the knowledge of the actual words being parodied. Therefore, they quickly identified the play on the four branches of arithmetic, but were unable to recognize Seaography and Mystery as plays on Geography and History, two school subjects not yet in their realms of experience. In order to recognize any of these linguistic plays it is necessary for the child to shift the

boundaries of meaning from the ordinary to the extraordinary. That shifting can only occur when the child is linguistically able to engage in and comprehend humorous speech play. Humor in literature follows that implicit metalinguistic awareness. Many of the linguistic plays in Alice depend upon confusion of word meanings or word forms thereby shifting the child's expectancies. The branches of arithmetic calling to mind addition, subtraction, multiplication, and division and actually presenting 'ambition, distraction, uglification, and derision,' count on the child's ability to play with the language and sort out Carroll's joke. One metaphoric language play was used by Michael Bond in Paddington. The old gentleman, captivated by Paddington's comical actions, comes over to intervene when the restaurant manager attempts to evict Paddington from the premises. Introducing himself, he comments, 'I've been in marmalade for fifty years.' Paddington immediately visualizes the gentleman up to his neck in a tub of marmalade. The children recognized Paddington's confusion with the phrase 'in marmalade' and several correctly identified the man's occupation.

'He sells marmalade.'
'He works in a marmalade factory.'
'He makes marmalade.'
'Marmalade is his business.'

Others, however, were as confused as Paddington.

'The man was in a marmalade sandwich.'
'The man was working in a marmalade sandwich.'
'He lived in a town called marmalade.'
'He was eating it for fifty years.'
'You wouldn't guess a guy lived in marmalade.'

Obviously the metaphoric use of 'in marmalade' was linguistically incomprehensible to many of the children. The children failed to perceive the use of metaphor and gave a literal interpretation of the phrase. This would concur with research done by Winner et al (1976) which concluded that not until the age of ten could children regularly appreciate the functions of metaphor and ably paraphrase the metaphoric meaning.

Much of the discourse humor in the books in our study was found in character speech. This was primarily a function of the personality traits of the character personified in his speech. Comprehending this linguistic humor depends upon the child's awareness of the character's idiosyncrasies that are reflected in his speech. For example, the notes left by Grimble's parents are representative of their irresponsible and distracted manner. Seeing the humor in those notes, which the children did, illustrates their accurate perception of the author's intent.

TEA IS IN THE FRIDGE, SANDWICHES IN THE OVEN.
HAVE A GOOD TIME.

It is a sharing of values between the writer and the reader that makes this character identification possible. As I have previously offered, language humor is not only related to cognitive development and metalinguistic ability, but is part of an ongoing social process.

A number of the books used stereotyping of adult figures to formulate comic characters. Conventionally, adults are to be regarded with respect and deference by children and any amusement at

adult foibles has to be indulged in furtively. The writer, recognizing the potential humor in this situation, exploits it to create humorous characters who represent the adult figures in the child's life. Grimble has his distracted, absent-minded parents. Homer Price can solve the mystery of the missing diamond bracelet while the adults stand around wringing their hands. The children quickly perceived the failings of Grimble's parents and were amused by the confused state of Homer's uncle and the sheriff.

Grimble

'His mother kept writing notes.'
'His mother and father mix up his age.'
'His parents went to Peru.'
'They gave him birthday parties all the time.'

Homer Price

'The sheriff gets mixed up and talks funny.'
'His uncle kept worrying about what Aunt Aggie will say.'

The teachers in Follow that Bus!, The Shrinking of Treehorn, Harriet the Spy, and Freaky Friday are all pictured as rather slow-witted and incompetent, the child's view, but not society's. The author recognizes this contradiction and invites the child to share the joke with him. The child must know the conventions or he could not participate in their manipulation. The children in my study delighted in the preoccupied fictional teachers and responded enthusiastically to their deficiencies.

'McGuirk the jerk, her teacher.' (Freaky Friday)

'Miss Whitehead had long feet and a hanging stomach.' (Harriet the Spy)

'His teacher said, "We don't shrink in this class."' (The Shrinking of Treehorn)

'Miss Beaver went in the wrong door of the bus.' (Follow That Bus!)

The taboo, previously discussed in relation to joking and the release of repressed emotions, is exploited by writers of funny books for children. It is primarily found in the use of unacceptable language. The language involves either rude remarks to or about characters in the story. Understanding the child's attraction to the taboo, the writer invites him to indulge his proclivity toward the unacceptable through the narrative.

'Pinky looks like a tall, thin glass of milk.'

'Laurie Peters is thinner and uglier.'
(Harriet the Spy)

'Ape Face, shut up!'

'Get out of here, Ape Face, and don't talk to me.'
(Freaky Friday)

'Shut up!' I told him. 'Can't you ever act human?'

(Tales of a Fourth Grade Nothing)

Certain sociological concepts are treated in some of the books I used that are not yet part of the child's experience: The Wombles cleaning up after the humans in Wimbleton Common, the ridicule of the elderly in Ordinary Jack, the attempted exclusion of Paddington from the restaurant because of improper attire, and the class

distinction in Homer Price. The subtle implied references to these social subjects can only be recognized by older children and adults whose experiences have created a heightened awareness.

In this chapter I have tabulated the results of my empirical study and related the findings to my proposal that humor in children's literature depends upon certain conditions: an awareness of the 'rules' of everyday life which in turn is a prerequisite for an appreciation of the incongruous, a metalinguistic awareness, certain unconscious psychological forces that find their release in humor, and a social sharing of the joke between the writer and the reader. My reporting and interpretation of the children's responses supports my proposals. I have not attempted to 'prove' anything for humor is too elusive an emotion to isolate. In spite of the volumes of research by philosophers, psychologists, sociologists, literary scholars, and laymen, the search for an answer to what children find funny continues. After detailing my suppositions about what specific factors impact on a child to make him respond to a funny book, there is still a gray area that defies explanation. Somewhere in that 'third area' that Winnicott has described, the child and the funny book connect. Sometimes the reasons for an amused reaction are tangible, as I have described. But sometimes, as a child sits alone and reads, a smile crosses his face and he is lost in a comic world of his own. Often when children were reading my selections silently they laughed aloud. But later, when writing about them and discussing them with me, they could not recall why they were laughing. Something in the story pleased them at the moment of

reading, but there was an inability or a reluctance to articulate what that 'something' was. It is the way the author induces the child to share his fictive world and subsequently, what each individual child brings to that comic world. It may be familiar and comfortable, a world the child knows and understands.

One night my father came home from the office all excited. He told us Mr. and Mrs. Yarby were coming to New York. He's the president of the Juicy-O company. He lives in Chicago. I wondered if he'd bring my father another crate of Juicy-O. If he did I'd probably be drinking it for the rest of my life.

(Tales of a Fourth Grade Nothing)

Or it may be a mythical tale full of inconsistencies, and an invitation to a strange and comical adventure.

One day Polly was alone downstairs. Camilla was using the Hoover upstairs, so when the front door bell rang, Polly went to open the door. There was a great black wolf! He put his foot inside the door and said, 'Now I'm going to eat you up!'

Each child will react as an individual bringing to the narrative the collective experiences of his young life. Those experiences combined with the child's inner needs are responsible for his developing 'sense' of humor.

X. CONCLUSION

What is humor? If we are to accept Bergson's view, it is the mechanical, if we are to accept Hobbes' view, it is superiority, if we are to accept Kant's view, it is the incongruous. If we are to accept the views of countless psychologists, sociologists, and literary experts, humor is comedy, wit, joking, satire, irony, parody and on down an almost endless list of definitions. I accept them all, but I do not believe that any of them have solved the mystery of humor. One of the difficulties with humor is that investigators approach it from many different aspects leading us to believe that in their scientific approaches there must be truth. But in spite of their scientific approaches, each group has reached a different conclusion, depending upon the particular belief of the group, from the same evidence: jokes and man's reaction to them. How can such an intensely personal emotion be explained by a philosophical tenet, a psychological school, or a literary genre? The answer is that humor can be explained by all of those methods and the various explanations help us to see what we do and do not know about humor. Beginning with what we know, from Aristotle's initial recognition of the errors and deformities of man to Shultz's resolved and unresolved incongruities, we have traced the mismatch as the origin of humor. Researchers agree that incongruities can only be recognized and shared when the traditions of each society are learned: the incongruous depends upon the congruous. Dramatists, poets, and novelists, recognizing the notion of the incongruous as basic to humor, have presented the humor of their

times through eccentric characters, odd events, and absurd discourse. Literature comments on the ordinary by presenting the extraordinary. Man learns and intensifies the humor of his time through social exposure. Various dimensions of the social context of humor influence the initiation of humor and the appreciation of humor initiated by others. It is generally agreed that humor is social commentary beginning with the oral exchange of jokes and funny stories and extending into the literary. Contemporary students of language agree that humor is dependent upon a metalinguistic awareness, a knowledge of the language of language. Freud and his followers offer the view that repressed anxieties and aggressions are the unconscious motivations for both the appreciation of and the initiation of humor. What has emerged from my study is a picture of humor as cognitive, social, and affective, a view to which I subscribe.

Children learn humor through the familial and peer group setting and are the natural carriers of the oral tradition in which the humor of childhood is most clearly seen. The path from the appreciation of verbal humor to the responsive reader of literary humor is complex. We conclude that children develop a sense of humor through a social sharing of a knowledge of the incongruous preceded by an understanding of the commonplace. Knowing what 'makes sense' precedes the understanding of 'nonsense.' The underlying motive for joking is to make the intolerable tolerable and to transform painful or frustrating experiences into humor. It is in the area of play that humor develops, along with the child's

ability to logically think, and to set boundaries between reality and fantasy. Verbal humor precedes literary humor and depends upon a metalinguistic awareness: when the child is able to engage in and comprehend linguistic play. Literary humor depends upon an understanding of the real and the fictive and the sharing of the literary and social conventions used by the writer. When the child neither knows the literary 'frame', the accepted humorous convention, nor understands the 'rules' of the commonplace, the humor is lost.

The child's developing sense of literary humor first responds to the explicit. Strange characters, odd situations, and illogical discourse offer explicit humor in both British and American traditional children's literature. The clown, as the original comic character, is part of the child's awareness of the incongruous. The response to funny characters by the children in my study was the greatest, with the traditional anthropomorphic tale the favorite. In stories like Paddington Bear and The Wombles which rely on character humor, the 'frame' is a familiar one. Stories that depend upon situational humor are more difficult for the child to comprehend since each narrative centers its story on a different theme.

When that situation is explicit, as it is in Freaky Friday and The Shrinking of Treehorn, the child sees the paradoxical situation. When the situation is implicit, as in Grimble, it is beyond the capabilities of eight and nine year old children. Even though the child may know the frame, the surface structure, he

cannot understand the deep structure. When the humor lies 'beneath the page', as in Ordinary Jack, it is much more difficult for the child to comprehend. The 'deeper reading' is a simple question of not taking what is said at face value, perplexing for the child who is struggling to set the boundaries between the real and the fictive. It is not just an ordinary boy in an extraordinary family that the author has offered, but a chance to identify with one or the other, making the rejected alternative laughable. However, the children in my study viewed Jack more often as sad rather than funny. Taking the author's words at face value, they failed to see the humor in the juxtaposition of Jack and his family. The child knows the boundary between the real and the fictive but doesn't know where the author has set it. Failing to see the generality of the situation, he responds idiosyncratically.

The idiosyncratic response, and the belief that the child of eight or nine cannot yet make a more generalized social response to funny books, leads me to the biggest puzzle of my study. Does sharing a joke mean you also share a culture? Is humor cultural as well as social? My response before I embarked on this study would have been a resounding yes! But if cultural difference means that British and American children tell different jokes that has been disproved. Both the Opies and the Knapps collected the same jokes, one in Great Britain and one in the United States, with the only difference being the characters. The characters represent the cultural differences, not the jokes themselves. Do cultural differences extend to the literary? Of course, since we know that

British and American literary humor are vastly different. British humor depends upon the understatement and the literary joke, while American humor depends upon the overstatement and the explicit joke. Helen Cresswell, in Ordinary Jack, describes a virtual calamity as, 'The Day Zero Piddled While Home Burned.' while Judy Blume describes an equally chaotic event as, 'The Birthday Bash.' Granted that the cultural differences are clear in the writing, what about the reading? My groups of British and American children responded poorly to Ordinary Jack and enthusiastically to Tales of a Fourth Grade Nothing, illustrating, in my opinion, that although literary humor has cultural differences, it is the development of the child and the content of the humor that impacts upon the child's reactions. Eight and nine year olds, still responding idiosyncratically, cannot see the humor in Jack's predicament. They see themselves in Jack's position, competing with more able and talented siblings and finding it not funny, but upsetting. The incongruous situation is not funny because it is seen as reality. The boundary between the real and the fictive is firmly on the side of reality. Tales of a Fourth Grade Nothing is also a story of a boy with a problem: a pesty little brother. But the problems are not deep ones of success or failure but are commonplace, involving little brothers who break your toys and invade your privacy. These problems are easier to laugh at because they are not the result of some failure on the part of the child/reader, but rather an annoying trait of a younger sibling. These problems are approached socially and become less idiosyncratic because of their apparent

universality. Everyone either has or knows someone who has a pesty little brother, but what child can admit to being inferior to siblings?

Cross-cultural studies are few, none with children, to my knowledge, and have failed to find significant differences between national or cultural groups. The underlying process of humor appears to be constant across people and so across cultures. It is the content that is responsible for the humorous reaction, not the culture. So if the same jokes are presented to like groups in Great Britain and the United States, it is the salience of the content that is responsible for the reaction and not the culture. A clear distinction must be made between transcultural processes and culture-bound, content-related manifestations of humor.

The same logic must be applied to funny books. It is not the culture but the content that is responsible for the response to the humor. The child must ultimately be able to relate humorous events to personal experience and to seek a generality of meaning in humor. The appreciation of humor must gradually shift from the simple idiosyncratic recognition of an incongruity to a more generalized response combining personal experience and literary humor. It is my guess that this shift does not complete its development until the child reaches adolescence, around the period of Piaget's formal operations.

How do funny books contribute to the child's growth in the area of humor? Through reading, the child learns the literary conventions of humorous books. The incongruities of characters,

situations, and discourse become familiar to the child and help him to develop an appreciation of literary humor and contribute to his ability to separate reality from fantasy. The movement from verbal to literary humor involves a change in the setting for humor. Deprived of an audience or someone with whom to share a joke or a funny story, the child must become both the teller and the told. Although, theoretically, he is sharing the literary humor with the writer, the writer only speaks through the page, forcing the child to both interpret and appreciate the humor. The child must be able to relate humorous events to personal experience yet seek a generality of meaning in the humor, a most advanced level of understanding.

My study is finished. My work with the children and their funny books was most rewarding and illuminating. What would I do differently if I were to begin again? I would not ask the children to write their responses in the individual part of the study. Their concern about the writing interfered with the spontaneous reaction to the books. In my desire to achieve pure individual responses, I placed an obstacle in the way of that goal: the written response. My concern about a personal interview after the reading of each selection was the possible influence I, as examiner, might have had on the children. My fear was that in some way I unwittingly could have transmitted my own feelings about the humor in the selections. But as I look back, I feel that a spontaneous discussion might have generated more uninhibited responses, in spite of my presence.

What implications do I see for teaching from my study? I see

the child's pleasure in reading funny books carried over into the teaching of reading. From delightful picture books like Rosie's Walk, children can learn to read and have fun doing it. There are scores of funny books at all levels of difficulty just waiting to be put into the hands of a child. By linking the child's competence in the oral tradition of nursery rhymes, poems, and limericks with the literary tradition of funny books we can establish an unbroken chain of pleasure in learning.

APPENDIX

I Books Used in the Group Study

Group A

The Wombles	Elizabeth Beresford
Freaky Friday	Mary Rodgers
Ordinary Jack	Helen Cresswell
Homer Price	Robert McCloskey

Group B

Paddington Helps Out	Michael Bond
Harriet the Spy	Louise Fitzhugh
Alice	Lewis Carroll
Grimble	Clement Freud

II Group Responses of the British Children (Ibstock Place School)

Group A

Character

Book	Appearance	Actions	Speech	<u>Situation</u>	<u>Discourse</u>
The Wombles (character)	11	111 111	111 1		
Freaky Friday (situation)		11	11	11	
Ordinary Jack (character)		1	111	11	
Homer Price (situation)				111	11

Group B Ibstock Place School

Character

Book	Appearance	Actions	Speech	<u>Situation</u>	<u>Discourse</u>
Paddington (character)		111 111	111	11	
Harriet the Spy (situation)	1	11	111		
Alice (discourse)		1		1	111 1
Grimble (situation)		111 1111	11		

IIa Analysis of Group Responses: Ibstock Place School

<u>Paddington</u>	character 15 (10 action, 5 speech) situation 2	total = 17
<u>Harriet the Spy</u>	character 7 (2 action, 5 speech) basic situational humor <u>missed</u>	total = 7
<u>Alice</u>	character 1 (action) situation 1 language 6	total = 8
<u>Grimble</u>	character 11 (9 action, 2 speech)	total = 11
<u>The Wombles</u>	character 16 (2 appearance, 8 action, 6 speech)	total = 16
<u>Freaky Friday</u>	character 4 (2 action, 2 speech) situation 2	total = 6
<u>Ordinary Jack</u>	character 4 (1 action, 3 speech) situation 2	total = 6
<u>Homer Price</u>	situation 5	total = 5

III Group Responses of American Children

Group A Chatham Park School (USA)

Character

Book	Appearance	Actions	Speech	<u>Situation</u>	<u>Discourse</u>
The Wombles (character)	11	111	1111	1	
Freaky Friday (situation)		1111 111	111	1	
Ordinary Jack (character)		1	1111 1	1	
Homer Price (situation)		111	1111	1	1

Group B Chatham Park School

Character

Book	Appearance	Actions	Speech	<u>Situation</u>	<u>Discourse</u>
Paddington (character)		1111 1	1111	1	
Harriet the Spy (situation)		11	1111 1		
Alice (discourse)		1		1	1111 1
Grimble (situation)		1111	11		

IIIa Analysis of Group Responses: Chatham Park School

<u>Paddington</u>	character 10 (6 action, 4 speech) situation 1	total = 11
<u>Harriet the Spy</u>	character 8 (2 action, 6 speech)	total = 8
<u>Alice</u>	character 2 (1 action, 1 speech) language 5	total = 7
<u>Grimble</u>	character 7 (5 action, 2 speech)	total = 7
<u>The Wombles</u>	character 9 (2 appearance, 3 action, 4 speech) situation 1	total = 10
<u>Freaky Friday</u>	character 11 (8 action, 3 speech) situation 1	total = 12
<u>Ordinary Jack</u>	character 7 (1 action, 6 speech) situation 1	total = 8
<u>Homer Price</u>	character 7 (3 action, 4 speech) situation 1 language 1	total = 9

IV Total Group Responses to Group Readings by British and American Children

Character Humor

Paddington Helps Out 28

The Wombles 26

Ordinary Jack 14

Situation Humor

Harriet the Spy 15

Grimble 18

Freaky Friday 18

Homer Price 14

Language Humor

Alice 15

V Comparison of Group Responses of British and American Children
to British and American Authors

<u>Book</u>	<u>Ibstock Students</u>	<u>Chatham Park</u>
<u>British Author</u>		
Paddington	17	11
Alice	7	7
Grimble	11	7
The Wombles	16	10
Ordinary Jack	6	8
<u>American Author</u>		
Harriet the Spy	7	8
Freaky Friday	6	12
Homer Price	5	9

VI British and American Group Responses to Fantasy and Realism

<u>Realism</u>	<u>Ibstock Place School</u>	<u>Chatham Park School</u>
Grimble	11	7
Ordinary Jack	6	8
Harriet the Spy	7	8
Homer Price	$\frac{5}{29}$	$\frac{9}{32}$
 <u>Fantasy</u>		
Paddington Helps Out	17	11
The Wombles	16	10
Alice	7	7
Freaky Friday	$\frac{6}{46}$	$\frac{12}{40}$

VII British and American Children's Group Responses to Humorous Discourse

N = 44 Books = 8

	Wombles	Paddington	Alice	Ordinary Jack	Homer Price	Grimble	Freaky Friday	Harriet the Spy
Distortions, Repetitions, or Dialect		1			IIII IIII			
Parody								
Puns and Jokes	IIII II	IIII IIII	IIII IIII IIII II			IIII II		
Derogatory Remarks or Name Calling				IIII 1			IIII 1	IIII IIII III

VIII Books in the Individual Study

Group A

Tales of a Fourth Grade Nothing

Judy Blume

Clever Polly and the Stupid Wolf

Catherine Storr

Follow That Bus!

Pat Hutchins

The Incredible Adventures of
Professor Branestawm

Norman Hunter

Group B

The Shrinking of Treehorn

Florence Parry Heide

Ramona the Pest

Beverly Cleary

Pippi Longstocking

Astrid Lindgren

Mr. Popper's Penguins

Richard and Florence Atwater

IX Individual Responses of the British Children
(Ibstock Place School)

Group A (written response)

<u>Book</u> <u>Group A</u>	<u>Character</u>		<u>Speech</u>	<u>Situation</u>	<u>Discourse</u>
	<u>Appearance</u>	<u>Actions</u>			
<u>Tales of a Fourth Grade Nothing</u> (character)		1111	111		
<u>Clever Polly and the Stupid Wolf</u> (character)		11	111		
<u>Follow That Bus!</u> (situation)		1	1	1	1
<u>Professor Branestawm</u> (character)		1111 1	111		
<u>Book</u> <u>Group B</u>	<u>Appearance</u>	<u>Actions</u>	<u>Speech</u>	<u>Situation</u>	<u>Discourse</u>
<u>Ramona the Pest</u> (character)		1	1		
<u>Mr. Popper's Penguins</u> (situation)		1111	11		
<u>The Shrinking of Treehorn</u> (situation)			11		
<u>Pippi Longstocking</u> (character)	1	111	1111		

IXa Analysis of Individual Responses: Ibstock Place School

<u>Ramona the Pest</u>	character 2 (1 action, 1 speech)
<u>Tales of a Fourth Grade Nothing</u>	character 7 (4 action, 3 speech)
<u>Clever Polly and the Stupid Wolf</u>	character 5 (2 action, 3 speech)
<u>Pippi Longstocking</u>	character 8 (1 appearance, 3 action, 4 speech)
<u>Professor Branestawm</u>	character 9 (6 action, 3 speech)
<u>Follow That Bus!</u>	character 2 (1 action, 1 speech) situation 1
<u>Mr. Popper's Penguins</u>	character 7 (5 action, 2 speech)
<u>The Shrinking of Treehorn</u>	character 2 (speech)

X Individual Responses of the American Children
Chatham Park School
Group A

Book	<u>Character</u>				
	Appearance	Actions	Speech	<u>Situation</u>	<u>Discourse</u>
<u>Tales of a Fourth Grade Nothing</u> (character)		1111 1	111		1
<u>Clever Polly and the Stupid Wolf</u> (character)		1111	11		
<u>Follow That Bus</u> (situation)		11	111	1	
<u>Professor Branestawm</u> (character)		1111			11

Group B

Book	<u>Character</u>				
	Appearance	Actions	Speech	<u>Situation</u>	<u>Language</u>
<u>Ramona the Pest</u> (character)	1	1	111		
<u>Mr. Popper's Penguins</u> (situation)		1111			
<u>The Shrinking of Treehorn</u> (situation)		11	1111 1	1	
<u>Pippi Longstocking</u> (character)		1111	1		

Xa Analysis of Individual Responses: Chatham Park School

<u>Ramona the Pest</u>	character 5 (1 appearance, 1 action, 3 speech)
<u>Tales of a Fourth Grade Nothing</u>	character 9 (6 action, 3 speech) language 1
<u>Clever Polly and the Stupid Wolf</u>	character 6 (4 action, 2 speech)
<u>Pippi Longstocking</u>	character 5 (4 action, 1 speech)
<u>Professor Branestawn</u>	character 5 (action) language 2
<u>Follow That Bus!</u>	character 5 (2 action, 3 speech) situation 1
<u>Mr. Popper's Penguins</u>	character 4 (action)
<u>The Shrinking of Treehorn</u>	character 8 (2 action, 6 speech) situation 1

XI Total Individual Responses of British and American Children

n = 16 8 American 8 British

Character Humor

<u>Ramona the Pest</u>	7
<u>Tales of a Fourth Grade Nothing</u>	17
<u>Clever Polly and the Stupid Wolf</u>	11
<u>Pippi Longstocking</u>	13
<u>Professor Branestawm</u>	16

Situation Humor

<u>Follow That Bus!</u>	9
<u>Mr. Popper's Penguins</u>	11
<u>The Shrinking of Treehorn</u>	11

XII Comparison of Individual Responses of British and
American Children to British and American Authors

<u>British Authors</u>	<u>Ibstock Students</u>	<u>Chatham Students</u>
Professor Branestawm	9	7
Follow That Bus!	3	6
Clever Polly	5	6
 <u>American Authors</u>		
Mr. Popper's Penguins	7	4
The Shrinking of Treehorn	2	9
Ramona the Pest	2	5
Tales of a Fourth Grade Nothing	7	9
 <u>Other</u>		
Pippi Longstocking	8	5

XIII Individual Responses to Fantasy and Realism

<u>Realism</u>	<u>Ibstock School</u>	<u>Chatham Park</u>
<u>Ramona the Pest</u>	2	5
<u>Tales of a Fourth Grade Nothing</u>	7	10
<u>Follow That Bus!</u>	3	6
<u>Mr. Popper's Penguins</u>	<u>7</u>	<u>4</u>
	19	25
<u>Fantasy</u>		
<u>Clever Polly and the Stupid Wolf</u>	5	6
<u>Pippi Longstocking</u>	8	5
<u>Professor Branestawm</u>	9	7
<u>The Shrinking of Treehorn</u>	<u>2</u>	<u>9</u>
	24	27

XIV <u>British and American Children's Individual Responses to</u> <u>Humorous Discourse</u>									
N = 16 Book = 8									
	Tales of A Fourth Grade Nothing	Follow That Bus	Ramona the Pest	Pippi Long- stocking	Treehorn	Clever Polly	Mr. Popper's Penguins	Professor Branestawn	
Distortions, Repetition, or Dialect	III 1		11	1	1		11		
Parody									
Puns & Jokes			111						11
Derogatory Remarks or Name Calling									

Lucy fitza

Tales of A Fourth Grade Nothing pp.19-26

Write the things that you thought were funny in the story.

I liked the bit when his father poured the cereal over fudge's head, and when he wanted to be a dog and had his meals under the table. I liked the bit when peter had to stand on his head because fudge would not eat if he didn't (and I am very glad that I'm not peter because I am hopeless at standing on my head) I love lamb chops, and when I read about them it made my mouth water.

Najib

Mr. Popper's Penguins pp.20-24

Write the things that you thought were funny in the story.

I liked him when he ate the gold fish
and when he went in to the fridge.

Eva

Ramona the Pest pp.58-65

Write the things that you thought were funny in the story.

I like the teacher because --
she said that Ramona was going to
get a present but she didn't mean
a present she meant another kind of
present. Ramona thought the kind of
present was a parcel wrapped round
in a ribbon. So her. The other funny
thing I like is when she did not
sidge because Mrs Binney told her
to sit down for the present.
Ramona thought it was a trick. She
thought if she stood up she would
not get the present.

Clever Polly and the Stupid Wolf pp.8-10

Claudia

Write the things that you thought were funny in the story. I like it when polly said what about me Sorry said the wolf 'I'm too full up But I'll come back another day and when he said I'll have six slices please.

Robin
Hasson

Pippi Longstocking pp.19-22

Write the things that you thought were funny in the book.

I liked it when Tommy asked about the horse and Pippi answered, "Well, he'd
in the way in the kitchen, and he doesn't like the parlor."
I liked it when Pippi talked about going to bed; it sounds like a neat
thing and I'll have to try it some day!
I was also funny about the eggs and about getting bald if you eat
n/2

Steffie Tre

The Shrinking of Treehorn (Incident at school)

Write the things that you thought were funny in the book.

I thought it was funny when
the teacher said to Treehorn that the
Mersery School was down the hill

See that its taken care of

teacher got mad when Treehorn couldn't
reach the water bubbler

When principal kept on talking about
a team

Robin
Hasson

Follow That Bus! pp.9-15

Write the things that you thought were funny in the book.

ere wasn't really anything funny but it would still be good to read. I
uld read it because it's like a mystery. ~~Even~~ Even though I don't
= mysteries, it's like being a detective and I do like detective
ies,

Professor Branestawm pp.39-44

Tara Flowers

Write the things that you thought were funny in the book.

I thought it was funny when he kept taking these
books out of the libraries. Also when he read out the
looking of a lobster. When he took the book out of
a man's hand.

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